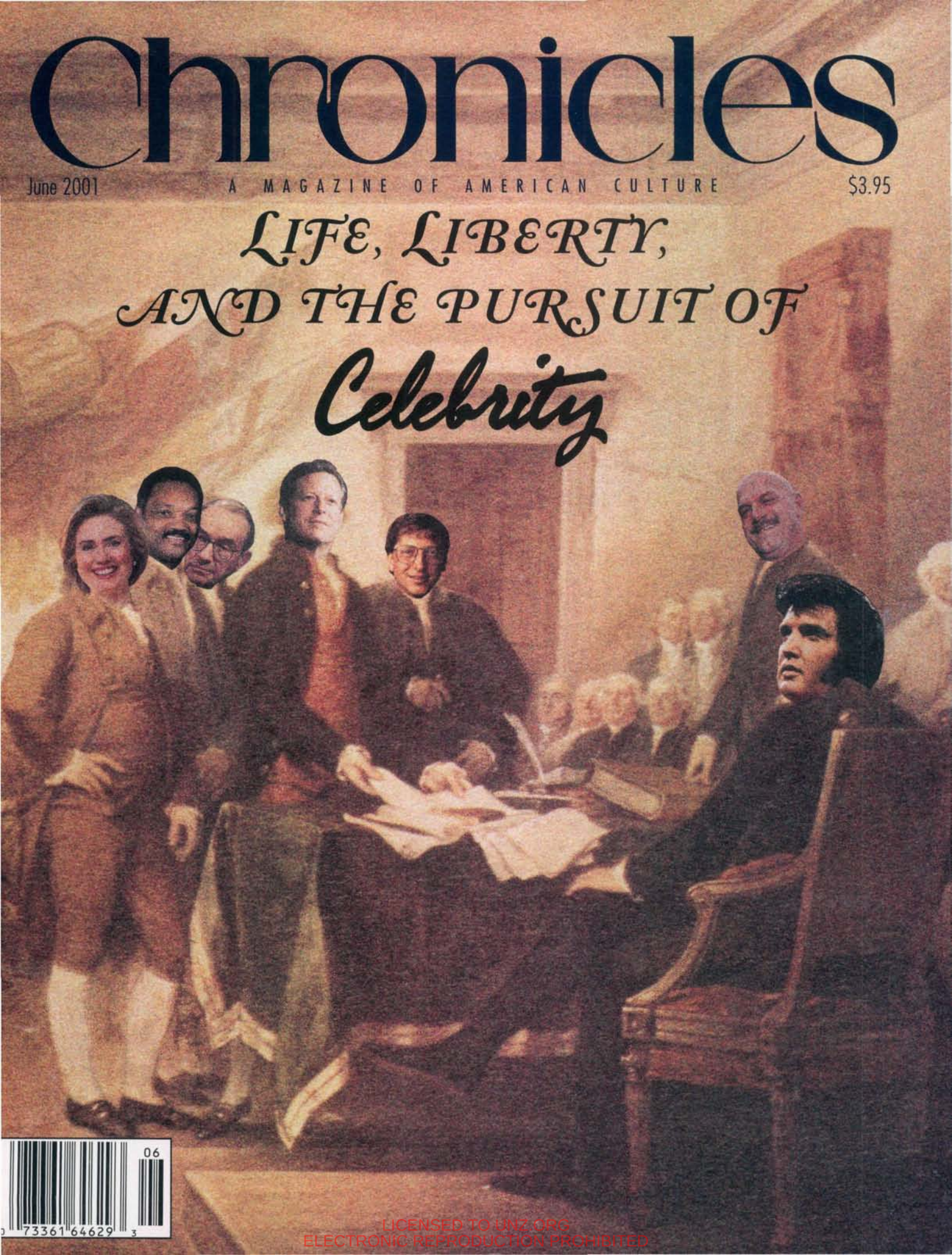
Chronicles

June 2001 A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE $3.95

LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF Celebrity



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We're "Catholicism's Intellectual Prizefighter," says Karl Keating

The Catholic Church is at the crossroads. The dissenters, heretics, and neo-Modernists are, with the full backing of the secularists who shape Western culture, now amassing their forces to destroy Catholicism as we've known it and as it's been known for centuries, millennia.

Symptomatic of the assault is a recent book by Catholic writer Garry Wills, a Pulitzer Prize-winning author, with the telling title *Papal Sin: Structures of Deceit*. Wills rejects Papal Infallibility, the Apostolic Succession, Transubstantiation, the Immaculate Conception, and the Church's teaching on contraception, abortion, homosexuality, the all-male priesthood, etc.

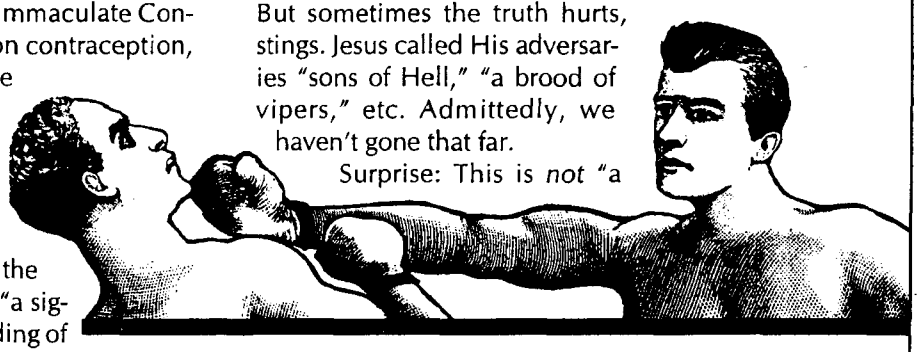
Will Mr. Wills get the de-Catholicized church he — and so many others — want? Many expect he will. Tad Szulc, author of a major biography of Pope John Paul II, wrote in the *Washington Post* that Wills's book is "a significant contribution to the understanding of the process of change, already *inevitably* underway" in the Church (italics added).

Yes, it *is* the common wisdom that the Spirit of the Age is irresistible and that orthodox Catholicism will inevitably collapse.

Dear readers, it's intimidating to be told — not just in this case, but over and over again — that you will inevitably be tossed on the trash heap of history. But we must *not* be intimidated. Marx predicted that Christians would land on the trash heap, that according to the "Laws of History" the triumph of atheistic Communism was "inevitable." But it didn't work out that way. One reason it didn't was because both ordinary and extraordinary people (from Solzhenitsyn to the Polish Pope) co-operated with grace and resisted, doggedly resisted — resisted when it seemed there was no point in further resistance.

"To everything there is a season," says the Book of Ecclesiastes, "a time to weep and a time to laugh...a time to keep silence and a time to speak...a time of war and a time of peace."

This is a time to speak, a time for war — a war of wits. We at the NEW OXFORD REVIEW, a militantly Catholic monthly magazine, stand with the Church of the Ages in resisting the Spirit of the Age. While we've been denounced by the hypersensitive as "mean-spirited," we haven't been accused of lying. We tell the truth as charitably as we can — given all the provocations. But sometimes the truth hurts, stings. Jesus called His adversaries "sons of Hell," "a brood of vipers," etc. Admittedly, we haven't gone that far.



Surprise: This is *not* "a time to weep," it's "a time to laugh." Oh yes, it can be dark out there. Malcolm Muggeridge predicted that liberalism — which he brilliantly characterized as "a solvent rather than a precipitate, a sedative rather than a stimulant, a slough rather than a precipice" — will bring down "the darkness on our civilization." But then, as Chesterton said, "The men who are signed with the cross of Christ go gaily in the dark." Moreover, the Catholic sun *still* shines here and there, and, as Hilaire Belloc observed, "Wherever the Catholic sun doth shine, there's music and laughter and good red wine." So we at the NEW OXFORD REVIEW not only resist, we sing and laugh. And that's what really infuriates our adversaries. Whenever possible, we lace our punches with humor, satire, parody, even sarcasm. Why? Because the heretics, dissenters, and secularists — the Sister Snakebites, Fr. Bozos, and Prof. Pooh-Bahs — really *need* to be laughed at. So join us in the mirthful Catholic sun by subscribing!

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Chronicles

A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

PERSPECTIVE

Being Bill O'Reilly 10
by Thomas Fleming

Latter-day Eloi.

VIEWS

The Avenging Deity as a Rational Projection of the Wounded Ego 13
by Andrei Navrozov
The true cult of personality.

Put a Lid on It 16
by J.O. Tate
"Stop me before I write again!"

Renaissance Frauds 19
by Tony Outhwaite
"I'm not a doctor, but I play one on TV."

The Declaration of Independence 22
A round table discussion by Stephen B. Presser, Clyde Wilson, and Donald W. Livingston

OPINIONS

Becoming George Orwell 25
by George McCartney

Jeffrey Meyers: *Orwell: Wintry Conscience of a Generation*

The autocrat and the artist.

Thirty Years Ago . . . 28
by Thomas Fleming

Eugene Davidson: *Reflections on a Disruptive Decade: Essays From the Sixties*

Breathing the spirit of a different world.

REVIEWS

Wesley J. Smith's *Culture of Death: The Assault on Medical Ethics in America* illustrates that hard cases are making bad medicine, writes **Harold O.J. Brown** ◆ Angela D. Dillard's *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner Now? Multicultural Conservatives in America* is just another attempt to undermine Western culture, finds **Paul Gottfried** ◆ 30

CORRESPONDENCE

Letter From Venice: Up With Prejudice 36
by Andrei Navrozov

Letter From Wisconsin: Dancing at LaRue 37
by David B. Schock

Letter From Arizona: Voice in the Desert 40
by Wilma Gustinich

VITAL SIGNS

POLITICS: **Billy in the Lowground** 42
by Janet Scott Barlow

RELIGION: **The New Anti-Civilization** 43
by Anthony Harrigan

Duke Chapel, Then and Now 45
by Mark Tooley

ART: **Hate for Hate's Sake** 46
by Aaron D. Wolf

DEPARTMENTS

POLEMICS & EXCHANGES 4

CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS 6

PRINCIPALITIES & POWERS 33
The New Meaning of "Racism"
by Samuel Francis

LETTER FROM ROCKFORD 35
Free at Last
by Scott P. Richert

AMERICAN INTEREST 41
Robert Hanssen and the New Meaning of Treason
by Srdja Trifkovic

IN THE DARK 47
The Tailor of Panama
by George McCartney

THE HUNDREDTH MERIDIAN 49
Getting Out of Dodge
by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

POETRY
Horses for My Father by Timothy Murphy 12
Deer on Rose's Hill by Brendan Galvin 14

ON THE COVER

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A publication of The Rockford Institute.
Editorial and Advertising Offices:
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Website: www.chroniclesmagazine.org
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Subscription Department: P.O. Box 800,
Mount Morris, IL 61054. Call 1-800-877-5459.

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Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture
(ISSN 0887-5731) is published monthly for $39.00 (foreign subscriptions add $12 for surface delivery, $48 for Air Mail) per year by The Rockford Institute, 928 North Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103-7061. Preferred periodical postage paid at Rockford, IL and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Chronicles*, P.O. Box 800, Mount Morris, IL 61054.

The views expressed in *Chronicles* are the authors' alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Rockford Institute or of its directors. Unsolicited manuscripts cannot be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Chronicles
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

Vol. 25, No. 6 June 2001
Printed in the United States of America

On the Catholic Conspiracy

E. Michael Jones' article on Adam Weisshaupt and the Illuminati ("A Room With a View: Debunking the Whig Theory of History," *Views*, March) was extremely interesting and informative, but seriously flawed in some areas. Jones is hoisted on his own petard when he suggests that Weisshaupt was demoted at the University of Ingolstadt and subsequently indicted by the Bavarian government based on a "public hue and cry over secret societies" and an edict forbidding membership therein. This sounds like the very Whig theory of history that Jones derides. Why not instead consider the obvious—namely, the Catholic Church's conspiratorial role in instigating the whole affair? Probably the Church viewed Weisshaupt as a budding heretic or troublemaker based on word of his activities and the "radical Enlightenment books" he ordered for the university library. My guess is that the books never made it into the stacks.

I agree with Jones that Weisshaupt and the Illuminati were immortalized inadvertently by Bavaria's publication of their papers in 1786. He also makes a good case that the Orwellian system of organizational control and internal spying makes the Illuminati the precursor of the Soviet system of control. But the Catholic Church's system for self-promotion and self-preservation is extreme, too, except that the public is not able to recognize the pervasiveness and oppressiveness of something they have seen, generation after generation, as a requisite part of their daily life, regardless of how inimical it might be to their well-being, compared with other models that are not allowed to see the light of day.

One might infer from Jones' article that, because Weisshaupt *et al.*, were enamored of Enlightenment thinkers, they would have been likewise enamored of him. I doubt it. Certainly, most of these thinkers would have rejected Weisshaupt's notion that man, at some point, should be "no longer in need of government." In fact, Jones' article seems more of an attack on the Enlightenment than on the Illuminati *per se*: He speaks of the "crude materialism of most well-known Enlightenment thinkers." He states that this type of thinking, because it emphasizes liberty and deemphasizes religion, leads necessarily to the loss of morals, the creation of social chaos, or—in an attempt to create order—the imposition of draconian social controls such as those initiated within Weisshaupt's organization and implemented subsequently by the Jacobins, communists, and fascists.

Jones badly overreaches on this subject. Thinking people are tired of the incessant—albeit highly effective—propaganda of Catholics and Protestants alike, which insists that a person cannot have a pure naturalist/materialist view of the world and still be moral, or that, if a person is moral but does not believe in the divinity of Jesus, he will be sent straight to hell, there to burn eternally. It is moral for the naturalist/materialist to devise and live by laws, ethics, and mores for the purpose of harmonious interactions in a society with threats of jail, fines, or ostracization for infractions. It may come as a surprise to those steeped in Christian dogma, but virtually all naturalists/materialists desire this.

It is cynical and immoral for Christian priests and followers to continue to perpetuate the notion that a person can be good only because of the promise of heaven or the threat of hell.

As to the "social chaos" that Jones concludes to be the logical outcome of Enlightenment thinking, if everybody was on board the Christian ship and the priests ruled, there might be a certain order to living. But history shows that this is impossible short of using the terror tactics the Church has used in the past. It would (and could) not be any different from the means advocated by the Illuminati and used by the Jacobins, communists, and fascists. Christianity could, in fact, be said to be a major cause of the "social chaos" Jones worries about, in that the New Testament mandates that people "follow Jesus" at the expense of family, friends, community, and nations.

I do not subscribe to the view of Jones and other Christians that morality and social order would be restored if the Western world were rid of Illuminati and Enlightenment thinking. To the contrary, if the Western world were rid of religion, mankind would have more opportunity to cooperate on a large scale and to focus

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on the more serious problems facing it: overpopulation, pollution, disease, extinction, climate change, and asteroid impact.

—*Ronald C. Corbyn*
Fredericksburg, TX

Dr. Jones Replies:

Mr. Corbyn faults me for failing to notice "the Catholic Church's conspiratorial role in instigating" the Illuminati affair in Bavaria in the 1780's. I failed to notice this conspiracy because it didn't exist. The Illuminati manuscripts were discovered by accident. The campaign against the Illuminati was conducted by the Bavarian government, not by the Church, not because Weisshaupt was a "budding heretic" but because he advocated the overthrow of throne and altar in Bavaria and every other country in Europe. The Illuminati were a threat to public order and were treated as such by the Bavarian government. There is no dichotomy, as far as I can tell, between the actions of the Bavarian government and the public hue and cry that accompanied those actions. To say that the government of Catholic states often had the support of the Catholic populations of those states is not a tenet of the Whig theory of history. To state that such an agreement is *a priori* impossible, however, is precisely that. After 200 years of bad fruit, Mr. Corbyn wants to rescue the Enlightenment's respectability by saying that, in spite of all the evil it did, it at least had the good sense to oppose Catholicism. Shorn of value judgments, that thesis is my thesis as well. The Enlightenment is finally being seen for what it was all along—not science, not liberation, but rather an ideologically motivated attack on Catholicism and, therefore, an attack on social, moral, and political order in Europe.

Mr. Corbyn tries to damn the Illuminati while praising the Enlightenment, but the distinction will not stand up to serious scrutiny. Just about every figure of note in the German Enlightenment, from Goethe to Pestalozzi, was a member of the Illuminati. There was no Enlightenment organization *per se*, but the Masons came close, and the Illuminati were successfully recruiting newly joined Masons precisely because they were able to deliver what the Masonic lodges only promised. Karl Marx, a later devotee of Enlightenment thought, believed that man, at some point in the future, would be "no longer in need of government." So it's not odd to think that his less rigorous utopians might agree.

Apologists for the Enlightenment are always faced with the unenviable task of explaining how and where it went wrong. I am spared such exercises in futility because I believe it went wrong from the beginning. As St. Augustine has stated, and I restate in my book *Libido Dominandi*, there are only two options in this life—the City of God, which is based on love and service, and the City of Man, which is based on the opposite of love and service—or, to use Augustine's term, *libido dominandi*, the desire to dominate. Once a culture turns away from the City of God, there is only one other direction it can take, and that is the direction the Enlightenment took when it decided to crush the Catholic Church. The history of the Enlightenment is the history of increasingly sophisticated forms of political control, all of which had their source in the Illuminati. Any ideology which proclaims its desire to liberate man from the moral law can only be an instrument that is designed to enslave him. Morals, or practical reason, are the only thing that make a rational creature free.

Mr. Corbyn is free to believe that a man can be moral without the assistance of faith. This is theoretically possible: The moral law is a creation of God, not a creation of religion; all men, simply because they are men and must function as rational creatures, have it engraved on their hearts. That does not mean, however, that they are free from the desire to distort it. Let's forget for a moment about fragile individuals and their penchant to rationalize their desires. Entire religions have done the same thing. The Jews rationalized divorce and polygamy, as did the Muslims and the Mormons. If entire religions, men of faith laboring under the threat of divine sanction, can succumb to this temptation, what mere individual can resist the same insistent urge to rationalize his own desires?

Mr. Corbyn's position is even more extreme: He believes that "a person can have a pure naturalist/materialist view of the world and still be moral." In a sense, this is also possible—just as it is possible that a skeptic will suddenly jump up in the middle of a conversation in which he is intent on showing that nothing is certain and announce that he has to leave because it is now 3:02 and he has to catch the train for Ealing, which departs at 3:14. He does so because he is a human being, not because he is a deep thinker. The same thing is true of materialism, which is a pseudoscientific justification for gratifying illicit sexual desires. Those who think it is something else should read the writings of the Marquis de Sade, the only Enlightenment thinker who is still being quoted today, and the only one Hollywood thinks important enough to make films about. Aldous Huxley, an astute reader of Sade, noticed the same connection between reason and appetite in his essay *Means and Ends*. He mentions there that Mettrie, Sade's teacher in materialism, wrote his treatise on pleasure as his follow-up to his explanation of how man was a machine.

Finally, Mr. Corbyn refers to the "terror tactics the Church has used in the past," claiming that they are no "different from the means . . . used by the Jacobins, communists, and fascists." Where, I wonder, does he find the Catholic Gulag, with its millions of victims? Where was the Catholic Auschwitz? In what public place did the Catholic Church set up its guillotine until the streets ran red with the blood of her political opponents? Mr. Corbyn's mind is haunted by myths that once flourished in English-speaking countries but have now fallen on hard times—myths like the Whig view of history. Worse than that, he is still laboring under that most dangerous of all illusions, the belief that, "if the Western world were rid of religion, mankind would have more opportunity to cooperate with one another and to focus on more serious problems"—things like "asteroid impact." Mr. Corbyn fails to understand that such phenomena as communism were the implementation of the Enlightenment, not its antithesis. The late and unlamented 20th century was riddled with attempts to rid the world of religion. That he can't see this is a tribute to the hold that these myths can have over the human mind. If anyone wants to engage in body counts, I will gladly place my money on Catholic Bavaria over the workers' paradise in the Soviet Union or China or Cambodia or any other genocidal heaven on earth that the Enlightenment has bequeathed to us. A world without God, as Cardinal Ratzinger—a Bavarian and head of the office that is the successor to the Inquisition—recently said, is another word for Hell.

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JESSE DIRKHISHING was a 13-year-old boy living in Rogers, Arkansas, who in 1999 hooked up with two homosexual men named Davis Carpenter and Joshua Brown. Maybe, possibly, he agreed to engage in sex games with them, but matters soon went far out of control. First, Jesse was wholly immobilized: He was drugged, and tied up with rope and duct tape. Then, for a long, agonizing night, he was subjected to every form of rape and sodomy his tormentors could devise. When they had finished with their new pornographic toy, Brown and Carpenter left him to die from suffocation.

There are echoes here of another young man tortured and left to die, though we certainly have heard of *that* case. I am referring to Matthew Shepard, left to die on a fence in Wyoming in 1998. The difference between the two cases is, of course, the matter of celebrity. In death, Matthew Shepard became a worldwide martyr for gay rights, the subject of numerous television news specials and movies, and the case provoked general heart-searching about anti-gay hate crimes. Matthew's death, you see, was typical of how homosexuals are treated by an evil and prejudiced world. Jesse Dirkhising, on the other hand, was a total embarrassment for the media, because the event totally contradicted the required stereotypes. The case showed homosexuals as brutal killers, reviving the old linkages between homosexuality and pederasty, child molestation, and sadomasochism. One could easily object that Jesse's killers were in no sense representative of gay men—and they certainly are not. They are in fact about as representative of homosexuals as Matthew Shepard's killers were of the *heterosexual* population, but that statement is politically inconvenient for a mass media in search of a good rhetorical message. Matthew Shepard became a national icon, a contemporary Christ, while Jesse Dirkhising became a nonevent, an absence, an unperson.

To give credit where it is due, a number of writers have bitterly complained about the relative treatment of the two cases; Jeff Jacoby did a magnificent exposé in *Jewish World Review*. Most critics, predictably, come from the right, which makes it all the more necessary to highlight one major exception. Writing in the *New Republic* (April 2), Andrew Sullivan analyzed the media coverage of the two cases, and noted that, in the single month following their respective deaths, Matthew Shepard was the subject of roughly 65 news stories to every one covering Jesse Dirkhising. Sullivan, a homosexual, was harshly frank about the reasons for the disparity: "The Shepard case was hyped for political reasons: to build support for inclusion of homosexuals in a federal hate-crimes law. The Dirkhising case was ignored for political reasons: squeamishness about reporting a story that could feed anti-gay prejudice." There could hardly be a better illustration of how our news media work, cynically selecting stories on the basis of how far their implications mesh with liberal prejudices about politics, race, and sexuality.

Perhaps *Chronicles* readers might like to help with a project I am currently undertaking, namely, to list the topics least likely to be taken up as cause-of-the-week TV movies. Let me start you off with a couple of examples: How about *That Every Woman Be Armed*—a story of a teenage girl from a gun-owning family. In the first half of the film, we see her being mocked and stigmatized by anti-gun fanatics, including teachers at her high school; she is vindicated, however, when she drives off a gang of would-be rapists who break into her house. By the conclusion, the anti-gun activists are forced to admit their mistake. In the closing frame, the girl meets her liberal teacher in the gun store as he is investing in his first revolver. Their eyes meet, and they smile. Or we could propose *Slings and Arrows*—the story of a gutsy journalist who tries to expose the criminal financial enterprises operated under cover of a local civil-rights organization, and whose career is nearly destroyed by bogus charges of racism. Or, just maybe, how about *Jesse's Tale*—the story of a young boy murdered by sadistic pederasts? No, I'm sorry even to have suggested it; that would be simply too ludicrous.

—*Philip Jenkins*

HUMAN BEINGS cannot be absolutely evil, according to Christian theology, because they are made in the image of God; though fallen, they always retain an awareness of good and evil. Recent reports in the Spanish newspaper *El Mundo* (February 26) reveal that some of the high priests of French existentialism and postmodernity are making the effort to prove Christian theology wrong. "Revolution" was cute and romantic in 1968, but we did not notice at the time that sex with children was as well. This has come out in the course of accusations against one-time revolutionary student Daniel Cohn-Bendit. A prominent leader of the 1968 student revolts, which eventually led to the resignation of President Charles DeGaulle, Cohn-Bendit has joined the *haute bourgeoisie* as a member of the European Parliament representing the Greens of France. Now Cohn-Bendit is in hot water as a result of an essay he published in 1975, regarding the "erotic" nature of his behavior with children in a so-called "alternative," "anti-authoritarian" kindergarten in Frankfurt, where he lived after being expelled for participating in the revolts.

"There were boys [or children; the Spanish plural *ninos* used in *El Mundo* can be generic, but if he used the French *garcons* in the original, it meant boys] who opened the fly of my trousers and began to give me caresses," Cohn-Bendit wrote in a 1975 article. "I reacted differently on each occasion, according to the circumstances, but when they insisted, I caressed them as well."

In 1977, when three men were sentenced to prison terms for nonviolent sexual contact with 12- and 13-year-old children, four prominent French "intellectuals"—the late Jean-Paul Sartre and his mistress, Simone de Beauvoir, and two current government ministers, Bernard Kouchner (minister of health, also director of the NATO occupation forces in Kosovo) and Jack Lang (minister of culture)—signed letters calling for the decriminalization of pedophilia. "Three years in prison for some caresses and kisses: enough of this!" said a manifesto signed by MM. Kouchner and Lang. Sartre and Beauvoir, joined by leading postmodernists, Michel Foucault (who subsequently died of AIDS), Roland Barthes, and Jacques Derrida and celebrated writers Philippe Sollers, Alain Robbe-Grillet, and Louis Aragon, all signed an open letter reading: "The law should recognize the right of children

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and adolescents to maintain sexual relations with whomever they choose."

As a result of the attention being given to his 1975 article, Cohn-Bendit has been denounced by many. Philippe de Villiers, an eminent French conservative, has called for his immediate resignation: "How many paedophiles can have used these shocking manifestos to justify, or worse, to stimulate their own actions?" Serge July, editor of the leftist newspaper *Liberation*, defended the advocates of child sex on the grounds that, in 1968 and the following years, it was the existing moral order that was the enemy. While he spoke of a "social triumph," even July acknowledged in a rather backhanded way that such articles and manifestos could "legitimatize practices which, *in certain eras*, were criminal." Cohn-Bendit, meanwhile, has claimed that the article in question was pure fiction and that he has never been a pedophile. It all depends, of course, on the meaning of "has been." (A grammarian might well note that if he still *is* one, it is incorrect to say he "has been.")

M. Cohn-Bendit is not a famed intellectual, as the late MM. Sartre, Foucault, Derrida, and Barthes were. These four men trashed the ideas of objective truth and moral standards; now we see the result. It is impossible to break one commandment out of the Decalogue without smashing the stone tablets to bits. In 1968, it was *chic* to be a revolutionary. Most of us who observed the scene at the time did not realize that it would eventually be *chic* to be a pedophile. I am reminded of the Psalmist's observation, "The wicked strut about, when vileness is exalted on every side" (Psalm 12:8).

—*Harold O.J. Brown*

E.U. MEMBERSHIP was rejected by 77 percent of the Swiss on March 4. Inevitably, parallels are being drawn with what happened in Denmark last September, when the Danes rejected further E.U. integration by saying "no" to the euro. The Swiss, however, did not even want to begin investigating incorporation into the European Union. As in Denmark, the people of Switzerland had to face a pro-E.U. coalition of forces composed of virtually the entire political and business establishment, leading unions, and mass media.

Nonetheless, E.U. membership remains the long-term desire of the current Swiss government. Foreign Minister Joseph Deiss has made it clear that the referendum's failure "would in no way deflect [the Swiss government] from its pro-European course . . . The 'no' vote could in no way be interpreted as meaning a rejection of EU membership as such." This was also the opinion of the E.U. Commission, whose spokesman said that the result did not indicate that the Swiss were opposed to E.U. membership, but rather that they did not want to begin negotiations *now*. The *Financial Times* (March 5) quoted the commission as saying that "they decided to answer the question later. This is a choice that we will respect."

The referendum was promoted by the New European Movement Switzerland (NEMS), part of the mostly socialist coalition that lobbied for the initiative's passage with the support of the left and its trade unions, but the magnitude of the result surprised the other major parties, including the Christian Democrats, whose leadership had endorsed the referendum despite opposition from the party's cantonal branches. "No" votes prevailed in every one of the Swiss cantons.

Victory was claimed by billionaire businessman Christoph Blocher, who led the campaign against E.U. membership. He spent up to $500,000 in advertisements arguing that E.U. membership would cost Switzerland its national characteristics of freedom, independence, direct democracy, armed neutrality, and prosperity, while forcing the country to pay billions to support bureaucrats in Brussels. Moreover, Switzerland would have to adopt a wide range of internal reforms to adapt fully to the E.U. model. Those reforms would undoubtedly prove somewhat unpalatable to the average Swiss Citizen. These include increasing the number of government ministers, reducing the scope of direct democracy, and doubling the VAT (value-added tax) rate from 7.6 to 15 percent, the E.U. minimum.

The Swiss Federal Committee for a Direct Democratic Neutral and Sovereign Switzerland, an umbrella body comprising some 20 anti-E.U. grassroots groups has pointed out that, in some cantons, the result of the referendum went even beyond their rosiest expectations. In two cantons (Uri and Appenzell-Innerrhoden), over 90 percent voted "No"; in Grisons (where the Rhaeto-Romanic language prevails), 85.5 percent voted "No"; and in Italian-speaking Ticino, the "No" vote reached 84.1 percent. "The growing resistance in Switzerland to the EU is due to the development of the Union towards becoming an anti-democratic entity in the hands of the Socialist International," claimed the committee. "The unjustified sanctions against its neighbour Austria opened the eyes of a large majority of Swiss citizens." The committee decried decisions taken at the Nice summit as instrumental in strengthening "the domination of France and Germany over all the smaller European countries." That domination is so great that "an unmistakable development towards an EU dictatorship under the Franco-German axis is rapidly taking place."

A further bone of contention for Swiss citizens, the committee argued, "is the new European army (60,000 professional soldiers, capable of being deployed in a 4,000 km radius for over a year). This instrument, which has not been democratically legitimised by the European population, will be the military arm of the Socialist International . . . It can also be used against European countries which do not comply with the French-German axis of the new imperium."

The defeat of the referendum is but the latest sign of an increasing dissatisfaction with the European Union across the Continent, including Denmark's rejection of the euro last September, efforts in Sweden to revisit a referendum on E.U. membership, and the growing dislike of the euro and Brussels in the United Kingdom.

In Denmark, billionaire tycoon Paul Sykes spent £500,000 on anti-euro advertisements in newspapers. Is it simply a coincidence that, while the Swiss were busy casting their vote, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruled that the European Union can suppress criticism of itself? Referring to this as a free-speech case, the *Daily Telegraph* (March 10) reported that the court justified its ruling by resorting to a legal device used by fascist governments to suppress dissent in the 1920's and 1930's: "the protection of the rights of others." This ruling, according to the paper, "shows that the ECJ (despite paying lip-service) does not consider itself bound by the European Convention on Human Rights. This is an extremely serious development because the EU's new Charter of Fundamental Rights extends the ECJ's competence into the area of civil liberties, transforming it into a full-fledged supreme court." The paper concluded that "The door

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could soon be open for the ECJ to start ruling on free speech cases involving ordinary EU citizens, or indeed involving Euro-sceptic newspapers," ending in a situation in which the court will be pitted against another court—namely, the one that enforces the European Convention on Human Rights.

—*Alberto Carosa*

IGOR IVANOV, Russia's foreign minister, is usually calm, cool, and collected, but he looked nervous during his March 22 press conference. Ivanov, known among Kremlin *siloviky* (members of the defense/security apparatus) as something of a wimp, adopted an uncustomary frown and set about lambasting Washington's recent "unfriendly acts," especially the March 21 expulsion of six "diplomats" (with 40 more ordered to leave in the near future) and a likely meeting between U.S. State Department representatives and "so-called foreign minister" Akhmadov of Chechnya. Ivanov said that Moscow would make an "appropriate response" (Russian TV later reported that Moscow would expel U.S. embassy personnel) and warned that further "unfriendly acts" could "push mankind" back to "the era of the Cold War and confrontation."

Moscow was already in a tizzy over Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's recent sharp criticism of Russian arms sales (apart from criticizing Russia's role in arms "proliferation," Rumsfeld remarked that Moscow would sell "anything to anybody," implying that Russia could be included on Washington's black list of "rogue states") and the January 17 arrest of Pavel Borodin, a high-ranking official of the Russia-Belarus Union. President Bush's commitment to a National Missile Defense (NMD) is also very much on Moscow's mind. Furthermore, Russian elites are worried about the increasing tendency of Western states to deny them travel visas.

Russia has undoubtedly mounted an extensive espionage effort against the United States, as evidenced by their recruitment of "super agents" in both the CIA and the FBI. The spy war between the two countries has escalated lately (apart from the "super agents," relations have been strained by the Edmund Pope case and the revelation that the CIA dug a tunnel under the Russian embassy in Washington for electronic snooping), though everyone knows that spying is a fact of life for powerful nations.

Russia's recent overtures to Iran, which include "nuclear energy cooperation" and the sale of "defensive weapons," have set Washington's blood to boiling, as did Putin's recent trip to North Korea and Moscow's lobbying for the end of international sanctions against Iraq. Of course, Washington is playing a huge role in the international arms trade and continues to interfere in Russian internal affairs, especially in Chechnya. The Bush administration, thus far, has not lived up to the "isolationist" label that the Democrats pinned on it, much to the dismay of Moscow.

Borodin is a charter member of the Yeltsin "family," the cabal of Kremlin insiders who helped make Russia what it is today: a bureaucratic/mafia regime with what may be the most degenerate "elite" of any great power (quite a charge, considering the moral attributes of American elites, who also played a role in developing the Russian oligarchy). Borodin is wanted by the Swiss in connection with a money-laundering scam involving kickbacks paid to the "family" by the Mabatex firm, which contracted with Borodin to refurbish the Kremlin. The scandal may also involve money-laundering through the Bank of New York, which in turn, is likely connected to the disappearance of millions in IMF "loans" to Russia. Under an extradition treaty with Switzerland, Washington was obligated to hold Borodin (who may have been lured to the United States, but that's another story).

With these fun facts in mind, patriotic Americans and Russians should focus on their own concrete national interests before jumping on any anti-Russian or anti-American bandwagons. If the FBI has uncovered any evidence of spying by Russian "diplomats," then they should kick them out. Moscow will undoubtedly respond. That's the way the game is played. (Whether all this gamesmanship has actually done any good for either country is another question.)

Washington has no business interfering in the Chechen war. There is no American national interest at stake there. Yes, it is a nasty and brutal business, but so is every other war. Furthermore, who the "good guys" are in this fight depends on your perspective. (If the Americans think Chechens are warm and cuddly, they should view videotapes of the "holy warriors" decapitating captives.)

Washington's blatant hypocrisy regarding arms "proliferation" is obvious to any thinking person. If the United States wants to be a "partner for peace" with Russia or any other state, then Washington should first remove the log from its own eye. The U.S. would have little to worry about from "rogue states" if Washington would simply mind its own business for a change. Iran, Iraq, and North Korea are not a direct threat to the security of the United States. The whole question of NMD can be worked out between Moscow and Washington. Aside from the question of whether NMD would actually benefit anyone but U.S. defense contractors, it is quite apparent that no system will be enough to nullify Russia's retaliatory capability. Russia should focus on maintaining the missiles they have, a difficult task, given the state of their economy.

Borodin richly deserves to be in jail. Patriotic Russians would welcome such a development, if only for the satisfaction of knowing that such deformed and base creatures, who have robbed their country blind, sold Russian girls into white slavery, and murdered with impunity cannot visit their Miami beach houses or French villas.

—*Denis Petrov*

OBITER DICTA: Our first poet this month is **Timothy Murphy**, who hails from Fargo, North Dakota. *Set the Ploughshare Deep*, his memoir in prose and verse, was released last July by Ohio University Press. *The Deed of Gift* (Story Line Press, 1998) collected the poems of this farmer and venture capitalist.

Our second poet is **Brendan Galvin** of Truro, Massachusetts. Mr. Galvin is the author of 12 collections of poetry, including *The Strength of a Named Thing* and *Sky and Island Light* (Louisiana State University Press). In 1998, his translation of Sophocles' *Women of Trachis* appeared in the Penn Greek Drama Series. Mr. Galvin has been awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Sotheby and Levinson prizes, and the first O.B. Hardison, Jr., Prize from the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Our art is provided by our art director, **H. Ward Sterett** of Roscoe, Illinois. Mr. Sterett received his B.F.A. from the University of Colorado and his M.F.A. from Northern Illinois University, and attended the L'Abri Fellowship, where he studied the effect of Christianity on art. He currently works as a sculptor, painter, and printmaker in Roscoe.

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H. Ward Sterett

Being Bill O'Reilly

by Thomas Fleming

Some celebrities seem born with a natural star power that radiates from them like an angelic halo. Alcibiades had this kind of "charisma" that made him adored even by people who disliked him. To be a celebrity, as Willy Loman would say, it is not enough to be liked: You must be well liked. Musicians like Liszt or Paganini had this effect on people; however, since the bland culture of North America cannot produce virtuosi but only technicians, booking agents and record producers have to manufacture the celebrity that is apparently not native to the soil. The nearest thing to a North American star pianist was probably the Canadian Glen Gould, whose sole charm—apart from technical competence—was the fact that he was so amazingly mad that he managed to turn being finicky—the only merit of most American pianists—into an obsession. Back in the 70's, an effort was made to turn the unexceptional pianist Gary Grafman into a star, but from all that I could gather, Mr. Grafman was an exemplary product of the exclusively technical education provided by music schools. Not to worry: The p.r. boys interviewed him and discovered he had hobbies and interests. From a collection of straw baskets or an enthusiasm for jasmine tea, these clones of Col. Tom Parker can create (if only temporarily, in Mr. Grafman's case) the illusion of celebrity.

Journalists are rarely natural-born celebrities; if they were, they would go into politics or professional wrestling. Some journalists may turn adventurer, like Stanley, while others (like Hunter S. Thompson) simply drink themselves into the delusion that they are original when they are only incoherent, making irresponsibility stand in for independence. Among American journalists, the only genuinely interesting character who achieved celebrity may be H.L. Mencken. When he played the village atheist, as he did at the Scopes Trial, Mencken could be as stupidly predictable as Hunter Thompson; but unlike the conservatives, who borrow his suspenders and cigars or mimic his stylistic eccentricities, Mencken could write well, sometimes very well, and he could surprise his readers by saying something kind about a political crook or by disclosing an affection for the Southern bourbons in Baltimore politics.

There are no Menckens around, if only because none of the would-be Menckens can take the trouble to read a book more serious than a celebrity biography. Some of Mencken's gruff independence (though not his brilliance or erudition) could be glimpsed from time to time in the off-the-cuff utterances of Jack Germond, recently retired from the *Baltimore Sun*. In most respects a liberal whose knee had jerked so often in the same direction that it had frozen in a 90-degree angle to the left, Germond was frequently unreliable in his judgments of Democratic political leaders, to whose scams he had an irritating habit of drawing attention. Appearing on the talking-head shows, as he frequently did in the 1980's and early 90's, Germond rarely looked into the camera, slouching to the side—perhaps to ease the pressure from his massive belly—and gesturing impatiently and dismissively with his fingers as if the time spent listening to Eleanor Clift batting her gums were a thousand years in purgatory. He never smiled except when he found something funny, which made him seem endearingly un-American beside such accomplished grinners as Morton Kondracke.

Germond's worthy counterpart on the right was Robert Novak, who is still going strong. Although Mr. Novak is a solid 90-percent-pure conservative Republican, he has never hesitated to ridicule the GOP leadership when it veers left. His disconcerting habit of blurting out bits of solid information or expressing his own opinion—the very qualities that make him so revolting to the old reliables like Al Hunt and Mark Shields—make him the best prognosticator on cable TV.

The late 80's and early 90's seem like a Golden Age: Bob Novak and Jack Germond and, when he was between political careers, Pat Buchanan. In retrospect, even Michael Kinsley seems like the real thing. Although "Mike" Kinsley (as they

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started calling him on *Crossfire*, in the hilarious pretense that he was a red-blooded American male) despises everyone to the right of William F. Buckley, Jr. (and that covers a great deal of territory), he takes the trouble to inform himself on the details. When the usual people were sniffing out Mr. Buchanan's "antisemitism," Kinsley told his debriefers that Pat's insensitivity had occasionally offended his Jewish sensibilities, but he had never detected any hostility toward Jews. Wrong answer.

Apart from Bob Novak—a specimen of antediluvian journalism who belongs in a museum next to poets who know how to rhyme and women who know how to cook—there are few talking heads left on television who are capable of giving such wrong answers. Most shows are dominated by party flacks who long ago gave up even the pretense to independence. To see Bill Press pretend to spar with Mary Matalin or Tucker Carlson is a little like watching two rasslers trash-talking each other before the match.

The party badge seems to have been pinned a little less securely on Chris Matthews, whose Jesuit schooldays did not allow him to stomach Bill Clinton's lying (though one would have thought the Jesuits would have taught him how to argue his way around perjury), but once the Lewinsky affair was over, Matthews obediently trotted back to the corral that Tip O'Neill had put him in so many years ago. At his most docile, though, Mr. Matthews exudes an urban Mick grittiness that seems out of place among the prettyboys of celeb TV—people like, say, Tucker Carlson, renowned (according to the misnamed FOX News webpage "Men Behind the Spin Room") for his bow tie and his wit. We have all seen the bow tie.

Carlson is never memorable, and his allegiance to the GOP orthodoxy does not allow him to rise even to an originally bad idea. He is to journalism what Leonardo di Caprio is to acting, and his adolescent voice and soft-as-a-spaniel's hair would make him perfect—if he could sing opera—to play Gluck's Orfeo.

Not to be confused with anyone who has ever been to an opera is Bill O'Reilly. A veteran of tabloid television (he spent years on ABC's *Inside Edition*), O'Reilly is now the hottest celebrity of talking-head television, beating out Larry King in the ratings. O'Reilly works hard at his job and is a skillful interviewer who can pulverize a Democrat's stone wall as effectively as a pneumatic drill.

Though Brit Hume and Fred Barnes wear more impressive neckties (which goes a long way with me), O'Reilly has earned his ranking as dean of broadcast news at FOX. Unfortunately, he seems to have fallen for his own conceit that he is above left and right, a simple man using common sense to defend your average working guy, because he's not about ideology, etc., etc.

Translated, this really means: "Because real TV celebrities have better things to do than to make up their minds about right and wrong, I prefer to pick and choose my positions from both sides of the Chinese menu of Republican-Democratic politics." Cautiously steering his way among the barges in the mainstream, O'Reilly attacks Bill Clinton and Jesse Jackson for being crooks but would not dream of questioning their basic principles, most of which he seems to share. He wants to take away your guns and SUV but probably would not want to raise your taxes to pay for the regulations.

O'Reilly shares this inability to think through an issue with virtually every other talking head. TV is a place where you can see Bill Kristol or—get this—David Gergen representing the conservative side, but not Sam Francis, Joe Sobran, or Tom Bethell; the left gets represented not by Alex Cockburn but by the *Nation*'s editor, Katrina vanden Heuvel, who can barely win an argument with Rich Lowry. In a medium where Christopher Hitchens comes across as a dangerous extremist and David Brooks is too intellectual, Francis and Cockburn would scare the bejesus out of the producers, and either one could have Bill Press and Fred Barnes for breakfast without killing his appetite.

O'Reilly, though he may be almost as ignorant, is far smarter than his competitors, and he reveals his intelligence by not making the show about news or controversies (and certainly not ideology). What exactly is the factor in *The O'Reilly Factor*? Answer: The O'Reilly, a character loosely based on one William O'Reilly who grew up in Levittown and kicked around local and network newsrooms for many years. Part of the attraction of the Bill O'Reilly character is the combination of cockiness—he's another smart Mick from the streets—and humility. He has (so far) managed to avoid the Rush Limbaugh trap of suggesting to his fans that they are envious losers leading drab little lives while El Rushbo is a celebrity among celebrities. To accomplish this feat, he has to remind his viewers constantly that he is just an average guy like them, someone who does not want to get bogged down in the "minutiae" (one of his anti-elitist code words) of a question. He even brings in someone less educated than him—the mysterious Arthell—to chastise him for arrogance and bad manners. It is as if Henry II went on a campaign to attack the Church but had to travel around with a group of monks to scourge him publicly every week for the murder of Thomas à Becket. Of course, if O'Reilly were really humble, he would bring on a serious antagonist, but I do not expect to see Taki in Arthell's chair any time soon.

So long as O'Reilly is interviewing other celebrities, his performance as Bill O'Reilly is almost letter-perfect, but as soon as he begins to read off the teleprompter for one of his "Talking Points" editorials, he sounds like a local TV news anchor doing *Charley's Aunt* at a dinner theater. Arthell ought to tell him that sitting and reading a script is not the O'Reilly thing at all: He should switch to a stand-up monologue with a live audience.

Conservatives, with that wonderfully naive optimism they always display in the face of their unbroken string of defeats and failures, take heart from the success of such media editorialists as Rush Limbaugh, Tony Snow, and The O'Reilly. In the meantime, the leftist news industry goes on, day after day, manufacturing non-information, inflating non-events (like airline crashes) into headline stories, and misreporting even the most trivial details of everyday life until these anti-facts can be assembled into a major piece of propaganda like church arsons, violence against homosexuals, father-daughter incest, the risks of secondhand smoke, and that stolen vote in Florida about which we hear so little now that—even by the wildest stretch of the *Miami Herald*'s imagination—Mr. Gore did not win the state. As the late Mel Bradford remarked the first time I met him (over 30 years ago), it does not matter who controls the editorial page of a newspaper. Only the news editors count.

But news editors and producers and writers are rarely celebrities; they are the grey little beetles scuttling under rocks, doing their job out of the limelight (or even the sunlight). They are not as cute as Tucker Carlson, and they do not have the signature neckties, suspenders, haircuts, or cigars affected by the ethereal Eloi in the bright light. But down beneath the surface where no one can see them, the hardworking Morlocks of the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* and CNN are writing the script that everyone in public life is reading. <c

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Horses for My Father

by Timothy Murphy

I. Alexander's Cavalry

Horses at Chaeronea
trampled the Theban Band.
Later at Gaugamela
where Persia made its stand,
horses embarrassed Darius
with flanking incursions,
harassing his chariots
and myriads of Persians.

II. Two Metaphors

Someone described the horse
as "poetry in motion."
Another beside the ocean
saw "horses of the sea."
The latter phrase has force,
but I dispute the notion
that horses are poetry;
it's not fair to the horse.

III. Montana *Koan*

Two fillies on the plains—
was it their flowing manes
or was it the wind that flew?
The twisted sage maintains
it was the mind that blew.

IV. The Cutting

Culled from a milling herd
a calf bawls at the sky,
and heifers question why
ponies were ever spurred.

Cowboy, colt and calf
all with their tails awry—
as though my dogs and I
ran roosters through the chaff

and made the feathers fly.

V. Look Homeward, Rancher

Riding to Beartooth Pass
he looks back at the plains,
ranges of grazed-out grass
thirsting for mountain rains—
a bankrupt watershed
where ledgers testify
that black ink runs red
after the stock ponds dry.

VI. Put to Pasture

The old stud is grazing,
nickering and lazing
near the knacker's yard.

He's shucked off all traces
of dirt-track races
scored on a loser's card.

What bookie has the art
to handicap a heart
when it has run so hard?

VII. My Father Young and Old

Ancient writers say three score years and ten
are all the time the gods allotted men.
Don't tell that to my father in his eighties
whom Cerberus has yet to greet in Hades.

Spending his boyhood on a horse-drawn plough
gained him the furrows on his worried brow,
the music in his fading memories:
"chaintugs ringing on the steel singletrees."

VIII. Transfiguration

The old stallion died.
Our roan no longer roams
this treeless countryside.
In a canyon carved by streams
beyond the Great Divide—
a greenway flanked by cliffs—
an eagle blinds its prey,
strips flesh from the ribs
and holds a wolf at bay.

IX. Lines from the *Antigone*

The wonders of this world are numberless
but none of them more wonderful than man
who broke the spirit of the mountain bull,
yoking its lathered shoulders to his plough.
He saddled the wild stallion, windy-maned,
and rode the ocean with his plunging prow.
All creatures of the sea and earth he named,
taming them with the nets cast by his mind,
and yet—against the forces of one wind,
the last tempest of death, he cannot stand.

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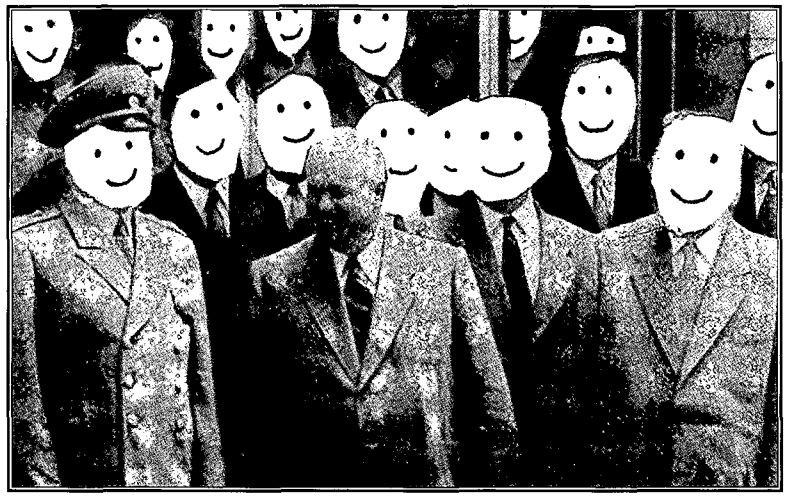
The Avenging Deity as a Rational Projection of the Wounded Ego

by Andrei Navrozov

"So spake the Fiend, and with necessity,
The tyrant's plea, excus'd his devilish deeds."
—Milton, *Paradise Lost*



H. Ward Sterett

The *locus classicus* of all informed discussion on the subject of the political essence of totalitarianism is the following passage from Plato's *Republic*:

> If you are caught committing any of these crimes on a small scale, you are punished and disgraced; they call it sacrilege, kidnapping, burglary, theft and brigandage. But if, besides taking their property, you turn all your countrymen into slaves, you will hear no more of those ugly names; your countrymen themselves will call you the happiest of men and bless your name.

Anyone who has studied the history of the 20th century will accept the truth of this observation as axiomatic. The confusion comes from those who—despite having accepted the axiom as a matter of political truth—go on to pile up volumes of tenuous and unconvincing conjecture about the psychology of the unfortunate nations in question.

Roll some archival footage of a Nuremberg rally, and you will surely hear them talk of mass hysteria. Zoom in on a giant poster of Mussolini, and their commentary will reverberate with words like "hypnosis." Move on to Red Square in November, and as sure as there are tanks on parade, they will prattle about the cult of personality. They accept the political axiom because they must, because it is incontrovertible; yet, equally, they must find an out, a back door, a loophole at any logical cost, because if all men are cowards and they are men, then they are cowards; and they wish to be brave. If all men are fools, they too are fools; and they cannot be fools, because they are screenwriters for the BBC, professors at Oxford, and fellows of the Hoover Institution. If all men would fall over themselves to salute a tyrant, then they themselves are pathetic, dishonorable clowns; and, to make a long story short, this is simply not how they see themselves.

They find the loophole, and with it personal absolution, by stressing—nay, inventing, with hardly a shred of historical evidence—an irrational component of that happy compact, foreshadowed in the *Republic*, between the absolute oppressor and the absolutely oppressed. The oppressor is therefore a "maniac," a "psychopath," and a "monster." The oppressed are "hypnotized," "mesmerized," "robotic." This way, they tie down to a particular people, time, and place what would otherwise hang overhead as a universally menacing truth. "It cannot happen *again*," runs the panicky undercurrent of their defensive psychologizing. "It will not happen *here*. It would not happen to *us*."

Arithmetic is anything but irrational, and I commend to you the following exercise, whose outcome is a dead certainty: On the left side of a blank page, write out the names of the people in your life whom you wish well—your friends, relatives, colleagues, writers or artists whose work you follow with interest, politicians you admire and want to succeed. On the right side of the page, write the names of everyone you even mildly despise—your former friends who have long betrayed you, colleagues who have hindered your success, unscrupulous and corrupt politicians . . . Then, of course, there are the people

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who are simply ridiculous, the people who are too big for their boots, and the vast number of people who, if push came to shove, would not lift a finger. Finally, do not forget the neighbor who always borrows your gardening tools.

My question is simply this: What is irrational about cheering on an omnipotence that, while turning all of one's countrymen into slaves, is likely to mete out its superior, inscrutable, and deadly justice to an incomparably greater number of those one loathes than of those one contentedly tolerates? The colleague who pipped you to the post? Off with his head. The politician who put the animal shelter in front of your house? Into the slammer. The neighbor who used to borrow your gardening tools? Fertilizing a frozen plain. Truly this is a paradise on earth, where all your innermost prayers have been suddenly answered, and all at the extremely reasonable price of a couple of people at work who were kind of nice but got themselves arrested anyway, plus an old family friend who turned out to be a spy for some foreign power and obliged by jumping out the window when the police rang the doorbell.

But our own lives are boring and poorly documented. For the Russian intelligentsia inhabiting Stalin's paradise, the delicious moment of reckoning, which I am trying to conjure up here, had arrived in the spring of 1932, and thanks to the archival scrupulousness of the secret police, there is no shortage of documentation describing the deeply rational behavior of those concerned.

Imagine. It is early April in Moscow. You are a budding writer, like Mikhail Bulgakov. Or a recognized poet of genius, like Boris Pasternak. Or an internationally famous theater director, like Vsevolod Meyerhold. For the 15 years following the cataclysm of 1917—when, as the poet said, "our land was all smudged by the glare"—you have been at the mercy of your natural enemies, Bolsheviks who gloatingly called themselves social engineers and artistic innovators while boasting that they had set the beloved world of your youth on its ear. They have mocked your native culture, threatening to abolish everything from marriage to museums, and merely mentioning Tolstoy or Pushkin in their ruling circle is like flying the Confederate Battle Flag in Greenwich Village. Their publishing houses have been printing pretentious, puerile, politically suitable *avant garde* rubbish, penned by every loudmouth you knew at university. Their theaters shut their doors in your face. Even if you managed to make some of your work public, their critics, writing in their newspapers, slandered you, and you could not answer back. You are destitute, without hope, without love, and often without butter to put on your daily bread.

In all, you are the collective Hamlet of your epoch, and all those courtiers with direct access to the Kremlin are your collective oppressor:

> For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
> The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
> The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
> The insolence of office and the spurns
> That patient merit of the unworthy takes . . .

Who will avenge us? For the generation of Pasternak, a generation that bore the world no less beauty than its Elizabethan predecessor, that was the question.

And then He came. You all think Lev Tolstoy was a count, and hence unsuitable reading for a good Bolshevik? Oh, worms! Comrade Poskrebyshev, take a memo: " . . . that the complete works of Lev Tolstoy are to be published in the Academy Edition of ninety-eight quarto volumes . . . " You all think the White Movement should be a taboo subject? Oh, deviationists! Comrade Poskrebyshev, put me through to the Moscow Arts Theater: " . . . Hello? This is Stalin. May I speak to the director? . . . Yes, I want to authorize the production of *The White Guard*. Hello? You say he died? A heart attack? What, just now? . . . " You all think Boris Pasternak is too obscure, and should write more like Mayakovsky? Oh, innocence without a strategy! Oh, formulaic mediocrity! Comrade Poskrebyshev, put me through to Lubyanka: " . . . that Mayakovsky's passport for foreign travel be withdrawn for an indefinite period . . . "

Vengeance is Mine, saith the Lord. The telephone of the Russian intelligentsia was ringing off the hook. Feverishly, Bulgakov started a play about Molière, in which the playwright wins an audience with Louis XIV: "You are persecuted?" asks the king. Then, to the courtiers:

> Are there devotees of the author de Molière among you?

Deer on Rose's Hill

by Brendan Galvin

Their white long scuts flicking their pleasure
these evenings, their heads deep
in the grass, driven from the cover of
serious woods where coyotes
are denning now, they feed like cattle
on the far side of the marsh.

Early one morning a fawn so new
it couldn't manage any two legs
at once trailed a doe down from
Rose's Hill to drink there. Sixty years
among the wind-driven around here,
and I've logged a few snowy owls,
one varied thrush, a ruff and its reeve
blown down off the taiga,

and seen two wolf-sized curs scouting
Rose's Hill before skulking back
into the trees, even heard
what I thought was folklore: the rabbit's
scream as my dog stood over it, uncertain,

but have nothing to compare with
that May evening when two yearlings
like rangy colts faked around each other
over there, bucking, for a quarter of an hour
putting one-on-one moves on each other,
deer in a time of coyotes, at play
in the teeth of their mortality
before they drifted back into those trees.

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(Confusion.) I am one. (Noise.) Then hear this: My author is oppressed. He is frightened. I will show kindness to anyone who forewarns me of whatever danger imperils him. (To Molière.) Weak as we are, we'll find a way to rout them, you and I. (Aloud.) The ban is lifted. You may stage *Tartuffe*.

"To find the time to telephone a writer while preparing for a Party Congress!" an antiquarian book collector recorded in his diary in 1930: "Just shows that he is a big man who can take on all the little people." "I shall return to Russia," wrote Evgeny Zamyatin to Stalin in 1931, "when it becomes possible to serve big literature without having to serve little people." With suitable fanfare, Zamyatin's passport for foreign travel was validated and the lucky favorite went abroad. That same year, Gorky returned from Sorrento, followed by Dmitry Sviatopolk-Mirsky, Sergei Prokofiev, Marina Tsvetaeva, and millions of newly optimistic White emitters. Pasternak ditched his Jewish first wife, married an Orthodox Christian, and published a collection of poems entitled *Second Birth*.

"I love you, King!" exulted Bulgakov's alter ego, who was actually just his plain old ego, the same ego that exulted in Pasternak, and in Meyerhold, and in Gorky . . . They were being avenged! When Stalin's cultural manifesto of April 1932, *Resolution on the Restructuring of Literary and Arts Organizations*, was finally unveiled in all its glory, just before Easter, intellectuals hugged and wept in the street, greeting one another with "Christ is risen!" Meyerhold hung a framed copy of the manifesto in his bedroom, the way a Catholic would a crucifix. "With one stroke of the pen," comments the distinguished literary historian Lazar Fleishman, Stalin's *perestroika* "drove from the literary arena those who only yesterday had seemed the omnipotent arbiters of writers' destinies. The dimension of the euphoria that seized Soviet writers in the summer and autumn of 1932 had no precedent."

Those who suppose that it was easy to seduce the Russian intelligentsia, for the simple reason that the intelligentsia is always easily seduced, should bear in mind that our Lord, Sun King, and Great White Avenger—publicly known, more modestly, as our leader, teacher, and friend—was striking simultaneously at almost all other social groups, from politicians to engineers to scientists, and enjoyed a similar success in every instance. Of course, by now, blood had begun to flow—first drops, then rivulets, then rivers. By 1937, oceans. But is it not significant that, as late as 1938, Bulgakov was still writing a play entitled *The Shepherd*, in which young Stalin is transparently identified with Christ?

If Bulgakov had only hung in there for another five years, it is possible that his telephone would have rung again, September 1943 being a moment in Russian history in some ways as pivotal as April 1932. It was then that Stalin finally cast his weary eye in the direction of the Russian Orthodox Church, mindful that he would need Christianity for his next restructuring, a final solution that would sweep away the last vestiges of Judeo-Masonic Bolshevism. Between 1943 and 1953, Stalin opened over 20,000 (yes, *twenty thousand*) churches and several religious academies that would keep the country in priests. But then he died, and as a squabbling oligarchy returned to the Kremlin, his master plan for a totalitarian Byzantium fell into disrepair. The first thing Khrushchev did was to shut down all those damn churches.

It was Khrushchev, of course, who launched the phrase "Cult of Personality" on an unsuspecting West, and, for nearly a half-century since his not-at-all-secret *Secret Speech to the Twentieth Party Congress*, that winged phrase has been a great boon to Western political scientists generally and Sovietologists in particular. Though not a genius of power maximization like Stalin, Khrushchev was no fool. His contribution to what cannot but emerge one day as the totalitarian Byzantium of Stalin's dreams—"a common European home from the Atlantic to the Urals" is the modern way of expressing it—remains misunderstood, largely thanks to the intellectual efforts of those same Sovietologists whom he had tricked like small children with his "de-Stalinization" canard.

> What is irrational about cheering on an omnipotence that, while turning all of one's countrymen into slaves, is likely to mete out its superior, inscrutable, and deadly justice to an incomparably greater number of those one loathes than of those one contentedly tolerates?

Khrushchev peddled the myth of the Cult of Personality because it suited Khrushchev's political aims. The West bought the myth of the Cult of Personality, manufactured in the same factory of clichés that produced the mustachioed Hitler familiar to us all—foaming at the mouth in a psychotic rage—because the West was shopping for a palliative. Here was the out, the back door, the loophole it had sought to buy, at the price of all truth and logic, to deliver its cockamamie historiography from the steel vice of Plato's political axiom. Because if Stalin, and for that matter Hitler, were not unhinged maniacs but master manipulators of their people's rational desires, and ultimately beloved avengers of their people's bruised egos, where does that leave the world of today—a world just as full of bruised egos?

Do not tell me that a writer rejected by *Talk* would not vote for a political leader who would see to it that he got a personal letter of apology from Tina Brown. Do not tell me that a fellow of the Hoover Institution would not like to receive a telephone call from Vladimir Putin, asking him about the weather in California. Do not tell me that an Oxford don would not sell his dignity for a bottle of mediocre claret. Well, then, remember the story of the Russian intelligentsia, and bear in mind that the day will come when there are little notes, and telephone calls, and even bottles of wine for each and every one of you out there from your leader, teacher, and friend, so that you may call him the happiest of men and bless his name.

Do not tell me about the Cult of Personality. The only cult there has *ever* been is the cult of ourselves. <c>

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Put a Lid on It

"Stop Me Before I Write Again!"

by J.O. Tate

H. Ward Sterett

How often we must reflect today that the salt hath lost its savor. At a "reading" at Queens College not long ago, I saw and heard Norman Mailer reading "poems" to his audience. He showed all the innocent delight of a child, and he was well received. But Mailer, rich and approaching his 80's, had little need to show up for such an exercise except the biggest one of all. Getting his fix of applause and his ego boosted yet once more, the bloated, jug-eared old geezer was again the good bad boy of his own dreams. The whole thing was as sweet as it was absurd, but there was not the savor of the old *Village Voice* effusions, or *The Deer Park*, or *An American Dream*, written under the gun serially back in the 60's. Nearly 40 years ago, Norman Mailer had already called himself "Normal Failure" and acknowledged that he had not fulfilled his youthful promise. Yet today, he is still ready to show up for trivial recognition for bad work, and he cannot even pronounce the word "poem" correctly, much less write one. But I do not blame Mailer altogether, because the audience was a large part of the fraudulence—and, come to think of it, so was Queens College.

Perhaps even more remarkably, I recently riffled through a library shelf of fiction by Gore Vidal and failed to find one creative or powerfully placed word in thousands of pages of droning. To ask why Gore Vidal writes novels today might also be to ask why he is published or read by anyone, and also to ask why he ever wrote anything in the first place. Unlike Mailer, he has no talent for fiction whatsoever, and never did. His pages are not as well crafted as those of Kathleen Norris, nattering on as though they were processed by Bulwer-Lytton or Snoopy in their "It was a dark and stormy night" klutziness. But the question "Why?" is only too easily answered. Walking into the film *Gattaca* not long ago—I wanted to see what Uma Thurman looked like in clothes—whom did I see but Gore Vidal, struggling to get into character. Like Norman, Gore just *had* to be seen. And that is the answer to the question: Vanity and impertinence are the only reasons Vidal writes, but they are no excuse for anyone to read him.

Writing is a kind of engineering or design that gets easily confused with the person who did the crafting—a mistake that no one would make with a bridge or an airplane. An excessive emphasis on personality is always a bad sign; what is worse, we cannot even blame our decayed times for the problem. The cult of personality was there from the beginning—even among the best writers.

Surveying the newspapers may suggest that writing is not the only thing that would make more sense if construed in reverse. The history of the Western world might be more palatable if, after an early democratic/plutocratic period in which lack of virtue and ability was no bar to advancement, a revolution restored the aristocracy to its place, and the populace, when not working at handicrafts, wept for joy to hear poems recited with a lyre at hand. Drama was a communal ritual, legend was epic, and all philosophers were pre-Socratic. Gods actually existed, the world was enchanted, and I hasten to add that the cultivation of grapes had been perfected, as time stopped forever in my ineffable vision.

An unavailable dream, you say? No, indeed. It is called Greek lit or "classics," and the Roman stuff is swell too, if you prefer. Of course, I do not mean to slight the ancient Hebrews. Those sensible people had wine also, and God spoke to them,

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and their poems more than compare with any you care to mention, probably because they recognized divine inspiration when they saw (or felt) it. This unavailable dream is found in a widely available book called "the Bible." I would rather read about Nathan rebuking King David with a story or about the reception of the Prodigal Son than about "President" Clinton pardoning Marc Rich at the behest of the Israeli government. More wisdom than the Knesset hath Solomon, and bitter is the fruit thereof.

If politics, culture, and religion make more sense in reverse order, then perhaps we can apply the principle with more focus in regard to the art of writing. We live a world in which the craft of writing is more recognized than ever before, if we can believe college catalogues; yet, when we look for examples of the art, we are driven into the past. Certainly, fine work is being done today, but it is not so easy to find. What is easy to find is lousy work, which is marketed in large part as a direct personal expression of the author, and the "author" is usually her glossy photograph—the younger the better. In other words, you are asked to buy the person as packaged in a book. So we arrive at the literary cult of personality, and the first thing to say about it is that never before in history have the personalities been such feeble ones. I do not think that writing *should* ever have been occulted in personality, but it *has* been for a long time, long before modern conditions of trade or corporate publishing ever existed.

Writing began to rot as soon as it was first inscribed. The perfect example is Homer (if he existed). Homeric procedure is fabled for its "objectivity," which noble souls have desired to recover ever since it was lost. Yet Homer is subjective or self-referential in his invocations, and perhaps even in his brilliant picture of the court of King Alkinous, in which the bard or rhapsodist Demodocus performs his epic function within the poem. Even so, Homer is "objective" here because he put the epic poet in his place and insists that, at times, the hero could fulfill the function of the epic poet, eloquence being a manly attribute. This pattern is repeated in the anonymous *Beowulf*, which shows something about the folk mind of prehistoric Europe in the good old days before sliced bread.

No sooner had Homer put down his lyre than the imitators, parodists, and academicians took over. Every imaginable corruption of writing had already occurred in Greek by the time of Alexander. "Modern literature" may be said to have begun with the poems of Archilochus, who was, I think, the first man in history to write autobiographically, and we owe more to the Greek romances than we should. Postmodern literature surely existed in the works of the hilarious Lucian of Samosata, who had everybody's number—including ours.

The Romans had many gifts, but literary invention was not one of them. Juvenal's satire stands alone for its severity and purity even today, but the modern-seeming pathos of Vergil, Catullus, and Horace is far removed from the glories of Greek poetry—though not so far as we are. Veneration of Homer was never personal, but the cult of Vergil always was, and Catullus and Horace—their brilliance notwithstanding—seem to us like people we have known. That is the mark of the declension into the cult of personality, and the only prescription for recovery from such a condition would be a recursion into barbarism and, with it, a healthy return of primitive integrity and objectivity, as in *Beowulf*, the *Chanson de Roland*, the *Nibelungenlied*, and the Icelandic sagas. Alas, romance soon followed, and many a tear was shed. Dante Alighieri wrote a grand poem of mystical architecture, harmonizing passion and reason in an uncanny balance, the likes of which we have never seen again. He put himself into his poem from the beginning, and has been the object of a cult of personality ever since. The rough genius of Villon, however impressive, features a lot about Villon.

Moving rapidly along our literary timeline, we find a fraudulent "rebirth" looming. Cervantes wrote the first, best, and last novel before dying on the same day as Shakespeare, rendering further fiction unnecessary; for this we thank him (and his humility). His humor objectified the subjective, as he split himself in two and, changing horses in midstream, found himself riding Rocinante (as Lionel Trilling once put it). Cervantes evaded "personality" by dissolving it in pages imbued with a keen awareness of the gap between the written word and experience. As for Shakespeare, some still question whether he wrote his works—a mark not of a problem but of his matchless impersonality, which afforded him the properties of a chameleon. In an age of religious strife and political treachery, there is no word from him about ideology and every word of imaginative projection. As shook the spear, so fell the staff, leaving us with a magnificent void as far as personality goes, and an unparalleled achievement as far as writing is concerned. Naturally, this lesson was ignored and reversed, as with the curiously empty cult of Bardolatry, and such insults as the lamely literal *Shakespeare in Love*. Will is just one of us, after all; for today, that is all a writer can be. But Will never sought publication in the modern sense, though he did tread the boards. His admiring superior, Ben Jonson, did wrap himself in a book. (Poor Ben—so proud of his master's degree.)

> Writing is a kind of engineering or design that gets easily confused with the person who did the crafting—a mistake that no one would make with a bridge or an airplane.

About John Donne, I will only say that a man who could preach a sermon in his own death shroud exhibited a humility that is notable. In some ways, the greatest personality in the history of English literature is John Milton. You cannot tell him from his syntax (or his diction), and that is what I call a writer. But those days are gone.

The greatest personalities and writers of the "long Eighteenth century" were such losers as Swift, Pope, and Dr. Johnson, who would not have allowed a representative of our culture (Defoe) through the front door. Dean Swift has a reputation for madness that is directly related to his lucidity, as much a matter of ideology as of style, but let us face it: *Saeva indignatio* is just not good public relations. Pope is full of tension because his brilliance is in conflict with his values; Samuel Johnson, even more so. The subject of the greatest of biographies, Johnson struggled to subordinate his personality to his belief in general truth and in piety. (Poor Sam—so proud of his honorary doctorate.)

The 18th century was the last time that a writer or egomani-

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ac or celebrity or *vieillard terrible* could be put in his place. Horace Walpole did it to David Hume in Paris on November 11, 1766. I remember—I was there. "You know, in England we read their works, but seldom or never take notice of authors. We think them sufficiently paid if their books sell, and of course leave them in their colleges and obscurity, by which means we are not troubled with their vanity and impertinence." You should have seen Dave's face, but enough about the 18th century, even though they were better days—public hangings and all that.

My patience with the 19th century has long been exhausted; there are just too many bad examples. Shelley should have been drowned in his bath, if he ever took one, and not in the Gulf of Spezia. Wordsworth (who did write some good poems, I must admit) should have been hanged for his youthful radicalism, and quartered for his aged pomposity. Keats and Emily Brontë could write, but the worst example was Byron, because his only subject was himself. He was the first writer-as-celebrity (in our sense), and his death at Missolonghi was a good career move. As for the rest of this unsatisfactory century, I will only point out that Dickens himself is the protagonist of all his works, and that he ended up making public appearances and reading from his work. Sound familiar? As far as our own shores in that period are concerned, I have always been perplexed as to how Ralph Waldo Emerson escaped the attentions of an enraged mob. Such an intervention would have helped a lot, but why cry about unspilled milk?

Our century began with the cult of Tolstoy, and the chief cultist—as far as I can tell—was Tolstoy. The whole story is as sad as it is disgusting, but we have to remember that there had been a time when Tolstoy wrote with matchless clarity. When we recall Tolstoy's cult of his own simplicity—he was, like Richard III and Ben Franklin, proud of his own humility—we realize that nothing is safe from gross corruption, and certainly not the vainglory of authors.

The rest of the century is pretty much a loss as far as mental health is concerned, but I blame two greatly gifted and photogenic writers for setting prominently destructive examples. William Faulkner, his other virtues notwithstanding, never said "no" to a photo opportunity or a chance to spout off. Ernest Hemingway was even worse as far as self-absorption was concerned, taking more trouble with his endless portraits in *Life* than he did with his books. Whatever their merits, these two did a lot of damage to others who wanted "to be writers"—that is, to be in gossip columns, to drink, to blow smoke. So much for the 20th century.

I have come to think of writing as something like harmonica playing: In most cases, it is merely a painful imposition that should be suppressed. Flannery O'Connor once said something similar, but she was always an exception. The question is, how can we effectively suppress writing? Well, it is too late to tell Virginia Woolf to go jump in the lake (she already did that), but it is not too late to discourage the young ruthlessly. Further, we can refuse to entertain bad writing before our eyes, or to indulge the vanity of authors as they blather on the tube about their creative process. We can also refuse to accept any political instruction from poets and fictionists. When it is too late to suppress writing or to nip it in the bud, as with Vidal or even Mailer, then the advice to them must be, "*Do* give up your day job." That ought to do the trick.

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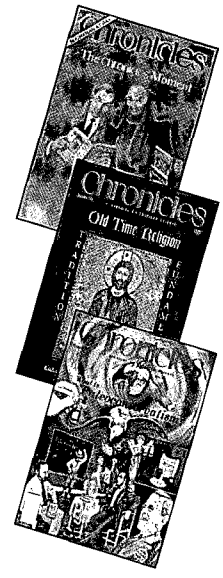

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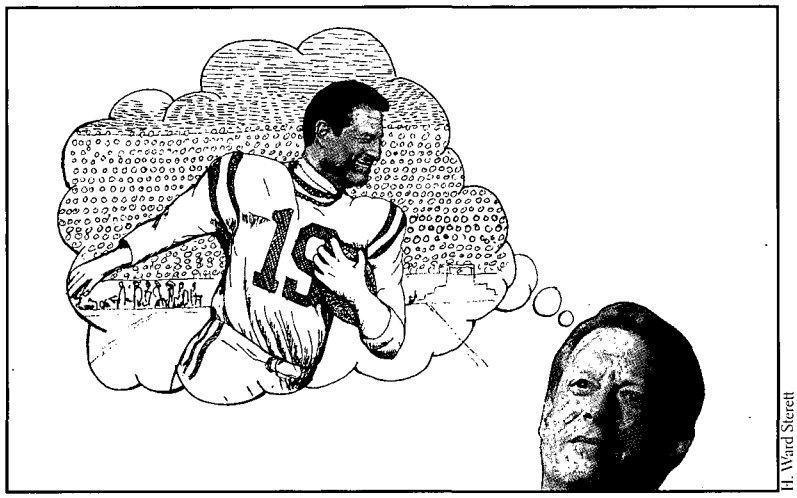
Renaissance Frauds

"I'm Not a Doctor, But I Play One on TV"

by Tony Outhwaite



Former Vice President Al Gore distinguished himself by a number of colorful claims, including his invention of the Internet, his status as inspiration for the plot of *Love Story*, and his crime-busting investigations that pulled the covers off Love Canal and the villainy of both the internal-combustion engine and flush toilet. During last year's presidential campaign, we were treated to lurid tales of his dog's drinking and drug problems and his uncle's exposure to tear gas at the battle of Thermopylae. Surprisingly, he never mentioned his historic appearance at quarterback for the 1958 Detroit Lions. Surely Mr. Gore, Renaissance role model for our time and inspiration to Buddhist monks, ballot-recount scammers, and celebrity race-hustlers, would want us all to understand that he, not George Plimpton, got there first. In Gore's case, each of these grandstanding absurdities was clearly meant to wow gullible members of a particular constituency, including the techno-geeks of Silicon Valley, the literary crowd, and the save-the-schnauzer environmentalists. Why were *Monday Night Football* enthusiasts not reminded how, fuzzy-cheeked lad of ten, he came off the bench to relieve the alcohol-befuddled Bobby Layne, tossed the winning touchdown, and began to take shape as his own favorite hero? As outlandish as all this is—and who can tell what other preposterous assertions he may make before we hear the last of him—the problem for everyone is that our former Vice Renaissance man thinks all this nonsense should be taken absolutely seriously. For him and for other practicing members of the Society of Ersatz Intellectuals, freedom of speech means never having to say you faked it.

It is not new for those in the public eye—even for those celebrities famous, as media pundits like to say, only for being famous—to fancy themselves experts on a wide range of subjects. In the past, there have been many people eminent in one area who were legitimately knowledgeable about other things. Granted, it is probably too late to determine whether Heinrich Himmler actually made the most spectacular chickweed soufflés in all of Central Europe or whether Russian astronaut Yuri Gagarin really could name the starting lineups for every Major League Baseball team throughout the 1950's. It is more likely, though, that Gagarin did not know a baseball glove from an oven mitt and, if he ever heard the name "Detroit Tigers," thought they were a gang of street hooligans who hung out around the corner from the main railway station, wearing black leather jackets, sucker punching the occasional tourist, and strutting their stuff for the girls.

By contrast, Theodore Roosevelt, a genuine Renaissance man, is celebrated in an inscription on the façade of New York City's Museum of Natural History as "ranchman / scholar / explorer / scientist / conservationist / naturalist / statesman / author / historian / humanitarian / soldier / patriot," and could claim real accomplishments in all these areas. These are credentials that not even a hard case like Alec Baldwin could truthfully disparage, as he prepares for his move to Paraguay in protest of the Bush administration (and where he may better indulge his enthusiasms for public urination and stoning members of Congress). But for a self-proclaimed expert like Mr. Gore, comparing himself to Jesus, hosting symposia on "metaphor" and tossing off moralistic statements that "evil lies coiled in the human soul," the satisfaction seems to come from seeing how much he can fabricate—usually out of whole cloth—for special occasions.

Today's Renaissance celebrity experts are remarkably comfortable with their many versions of themselves. With four or five minutes' preparation and an absolute minimum of actual knowledge, they are always ready to bob, weave, riff, and pontificate on any number of issues, figuring—rightly—that neither the media nor the general public will check carefully enough to catch them in yet another outrageous pretension. Whether it is Michael Douglas riled up about nukes, or Shirley MacLaine

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detailing her romps with the Emperor Charlemagne all those centuries ago (they were seen together again last week in Cleveland; this time, there may be photos), or Barbra Streisand—woofers and tweeters cranked up to hearing-impairment volume—claiming to know more about public policy than Sharon Stone, or Toni Morrison lauding Bill Clinton's performance as the country's first black president, the famous and foolish have really outdone themselves in recent years.

Some decades ago, Raymond Burr, already well known for his portrayals of such fictitious judicial figures as Perry Mason and Ironsides, was asked by a professional organization to appear and deliver his thoughts on justice. Burr politely declined, reminding them that he was an actor, not a lawyer or prosecutor. More recently, such Renaissance experts as Alan Alda and Ed Asner have appeared at public gatherings to give the attendees the benefit of their vast resources of knowledge on important matters. Alda, without question, used the experience picked up during those hellish years of battlefield surgery on *M*A*S*H* to instruct those present on erectile dysfunction, public sanitation in Mauritania's southern provinces, and compulsory euthanasia for the wealthy; and it is reasonable to assume that the cantankerous Asner, still thinking he was Lou Grant, reminded his audience of the importance of insults in headline-writing and what censorship means to people who hate to be interrupted. Someone, after all, must stand tall to proclaim the right of celebrities to preen, trumpet their misconceptions about the world, and behave like oafs in public.

The result is that these are the best of times for self-anointed experts; lately, they have claimed *carte blanche* to denounce authoritatively the Founding Fathers as racists, boozers, and ne'er-do-wells, and there is an unconfirmed rumor that Jesse Jackson, in a state of the highest dudgeon since Steve Martin, and not Mumia Abu-Jamal, was selected to host this year's Academy Awards (clearly another example of Selma '65 racism), will take to the airwaves to "out" President James Monroe, attacking the Monroe Doctrine as nothing but a white-supremacist patriotic ploy to divert attention from the President's string of Peeping Tom incidents up and down the East Coast. Demeaning the dead really excites these new experts: They can maintain, without fear of contradiction, legal proceedings, or a clout in the eye, that they know for a fact that George Washington often sneaked out of the White House at night to carve "Martha is a strumpet" on the trees in Lafayette Park across the street, and that Thomas Jefferson not only consorted with slaves but pawed coeds and may even have taunted one dancing bear too many during his visits to the National Zoo.

Mel Brooks was obviously joking when, during an interview with critic Kenneth Tynan some years ago, he theorized that Napoleon may have been Jewish because "he was short enough, also he was very nervous and couldn't keep his hands steady. That's why he always kept them under his lapels." By contrast, Diane Keaton, appearing several years ago at the Academy Awards ceremony in an alarming outfit that made her look like Mao Tse-tung disguised as a food-service worker, appeared deadly serious—and slightly unhinged—as she waxed indignant about what "being normal" really meant. While precise figures are not available from the Bureau of Normal Statistics, it is reasonable to estimate that somewhere between 96.3 and 96.7 percent of the American public have a ballpark idea of what is meant by the term—at least 46 percent of the time. Thus, Keaton's comments should carry equal weight with Rosie O'Donnell's antic posturing about gun violence or New York City's homeless situation (both declining problems for years), or with Jimmy Carter's infantile apologies for colonialism as, dispatched by the egghead pantywaists in the Clinton administration, he formally handed over the Panama Canal. Perhaps Mr. Carter's next combat mission will be to storm CIA Headquarters in Langley, ball-peen hammer clutched tightly in his arthritic paw to disable the security system—all the while preaching, with the same ostentatious empathy so often displayed by Bill Clinton, the renaissance qualities of openness and goodwill to impress self-important soul-trolls Susan Sarandon and Tim Robbins and the governing board of Emily's List.

There are some, like hyper-gadfly attorney Alan Dershowitz or critic Susan Sontag, who seem to fancy themselves experts on *everything*. With Dershowitz, it is constitutional law, race relations, and presidential perjury, and there will be no stopping him should he attempt the trifecta of Airedale-breeding, the intricacies of literary translation from the Lakota Sioux dialect, and the significance of the loquat in Oriental culture. Sontag, forever in love with the white noise of her own intellect, is known for such extravagant abstractions as "photographers seem to need periodically to resist their own knowingness and to re-mystify what they do"—a comment that must have astounded the ghosts of Margaret Bourke-White, Alfred Stieglitz, and Walker Evans and, were they reminded of it, would terrify Francesco Scavullo and even Sontag's pal Annie Leibovitz, who might now be forced to reassess their entire careers to make sure they have not behaved badly. Another of Sontag's authoritative declarations is that the "white race is the cancer of human history," which sounds suspiciously like the germ of an idea for the second book in her trilogy of definitive philosophical works, perhaps to be titled *Arrogance as Metaphor*. Other Renaissance experts merely pick one subject, master it imperfectly, and proceed to wing it from then on: All too soon, with his new role on the television sitcom *Spin City*, we will be hearing from actor Charlie Sheen on the proper distribution of social services, although there may be no truth to the rumor that Katie Couric, berserk with self-admiration after watching (for the 345th time) the videotape of her live colon exhibition on network television, will donate an ovary during an appearance at Radio City Music Hall and, throughout the process itself, ruminate on organ replacement via radio hookup with Larry King.

The thrills of all this are obvious: Where else but in today's celebrity culture or on the *David Letterman Show* can a pompous, ill-informed simpleton trot out clownish drivel as Renaissance wisdom and claim—with a straight face—its validity? According to Bill Clinton—a New Democrat *and* New Renaissance man who feels our pain, remembers nonexistent church-burnings in Arkansas from his youth, and did *not* have sex with that woman—it all depends on "what the meaning of 'is' is." With Letterman, always the entertainer and prankster, we naturally expect such spoofs as his running series of Top Ten lists. The bizarre thing about the new Renaissance experts, however, is that they seem to think they actually *are* Gandhi, or Albert Schweitzer, or the second comings of Murray Kempton or William F. Buckley, Jr. Such inveterate hams as Alda and Asner conveniently forget that they were reading scripts; they act as if we should believe that they are qualified to perform open-heart surgery or handle a newspaper censorship controversy. More recently, retired newsreader Walter Cronkite—sounding more like Jimmy Carter with each passing day—has spoken out on the rewards to be reaped from one-world government, a concept that

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cost upward of 100 million lives last century. Today's Renaissance experts expect the public to accept every benighted proclamation as absolute truth, defying us to question the statements made or the motives behind the foolishness. With these new *cognoscenti*, what we *see* is idiotic enough, but what we *get* is far worse: show-business megalomania and crackbrained New Age psychobabble dressed up as knowledge and reality.

There exists—largely in academia but in danger of spreading like a cloud of marauding Mediterranean fruit flies into the public at large—what might be called the "determination to be weird." Recent decades have brought ingenious new disciplines such as New Math, whereby two plus two equals 11 (except on alternate rainy Thursday afternoons); a program called "Whole Language," whose advocates seem to suggest that it is not so important for a youngster to be able to read, write, or spell properly, only that—for purposes of self-esteem—the little tyke take an honest crack at it; and a more recent enthusiasm, only now gaining momentum in the clammy equatorial atmospheres of college faculty lounges, that there is no such thing as objective knowledge. This newest breakthrough promises fabulous potential benefits for mankind down to the bottom quintile of wage earners. Within this postmodern, free-floating structure of reality, academics, lawyers, and other con artists will be able to reeducate the drooling, disoriented masses about how the United States—and specifically the state of Idaho—was responsible for the Cold War, how the roots of modern civilization lie not in ancient Greece, Rome, or Egypt, but in Bangui, squalid river-town capital of the Central African Republic; how Teddy Kennedy really did "dive repeatedly" at Chappaquiddick and Bill Clinton was truthful when he claimed to have "wept uncontrollably" in 1963 while watching Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech on TV. Such transparent fakery is neatly defined by columnist Cindy Adams' witticism that "the hardest thing for me to believe about the Bible is that there were only 2 asses in the ark."

Little matters to the Renaissance experts except their own stature. Sadly, our recent leadership has contributed mightily to the blizzard of contrivances presented as reality and good sense, and they have been boosted by the media who, barely into the first Clinton-Gore term, gushed with adolescent infatuation while trumpeting the Clintons' alleged Renaissance qualities: she, a tireless supporter of childrens' rights and "one of the top hundred lawyers in the country"—a ranking certified, no doubt, by the Associated Press Coaches' Poll of top lawyers; he, the policy wonk, still conversant in German from his Rhodes Scholar days and, class guy that he is, reputedly a collector of rare Wedgwood. Thus, years later, the President felt completely free to spin out the canard that "even Presidents have private lives"—and, therefore, they should be given the respect, the free rein, and (of course) the privacy to commit perjury, obstruction of justice, character assassination, even treason as laws are broken, evidence suppressed, critics and opponents slandered, national security sabotaged, and defense secrets passed along to hostile foreign powers for campaign funds.

When writer Mary McCarthy, on Dick Cavett's television show in 1980, said of rival Lillian Hellman that "every word she writes is a lie, including 'and' and 'the,'" an intriguing precedent was established. Today, given the momentum built up by Bill Clinton as he tweaked the public with falsehood after falsehood while claiming that all has been forgiven and even demanding apologies from others, it may not be long before some wicked commentator amends McCarthy's provocative declaration to describe our former First Renaissance man as follows: "Every word Mr. Clinton speaks is a lie, including 'Bill' and 'Clinton.'" His assertions on gun control, school reform, race relations, religion, and partial-birth abortion were the epitome of flagrant duplicity beneath only the flimsiest veneer of historical reality and bipartisan debate. Similarly, Al Gore's abusive demagoguery over global warming and the Kyoto Treaty—like his self-obsessed postelection "I'll do anything to win" rallying cry—increasingly resembles the hysteria of a zealot, and one wonders how completely out-of-hand his arguments may get. We must watch closely to see if he begins blaming the dubious phenomenon for such sinister occurrences as the disorder in the Baltimore Orioles' bullpen, the near-total disappearance of frogs from the third floor of the Old Executive Office Building, and the recent pandemic of print-media misspellings of the words "glyptodont" and "fenugreek." Now, in the nuclear winter of his discontent, he can proceed in the spirit of bipartisanship to talk up more right-wing conspiracies for the likes of Jack Newfield, Eleanor Clift, Joe Conason, and their block-warden brethren to pursue with fangs bared.

Yet one of the most unpleasant things about modern Renaissance types is that it can be very difficult to get rid of them; once established, they remain on hand, eager to foul the air with foolishness at the barest hint of an invitation. They pretend to master additional disciplines in adjacent areas, assume newer and greater levels of authority, even begin to contradict legitimate scholars. Alan Alda, after his starring role in the hit Broadway play *Art*, may suddenly turn up at New York City's Whitney Museum to lecture the society crowd on the brushwork of Renaissance masters Van Dyck and van der Weyden, and visitors will be compelled to wear tiny buttons that read "I can't imagine ever wanting to be Flemish." Sen. Hillary Clinton, her customary fever of hubris stoked even higher by the cleverness of her observation that the world must learn to discredit the concept of "another person's child," has given signs that, politics and future self-congratulatory memoirs aside, child psychology may be her true calling. In her 1996 book, *It Takes a Village—and Other Lessons We Learn From Children*, she trotted out a laundry list of specious, pseudophilosophical platitudes while failing to acknowledge—and then trying to cheat—the Georgetown professor who had done the writing for her. More recently, the former First Lady has asked the nation to buy into allegations that everyone is plotting against her (slavering right-wingers, treasonous left-wingers, the entire Washington Redskins' defensive backfield, all those renegades from the White House's 1996 "Communication Stream of Conspiracy Commerce" report), that only she is qualified to make proper decisions about serious matters, and—as revealed in an interview in *New York* magazine last year—that it is impossible to insult her. More ominous, though, is the hint that there should be some sort of roving band of ombudsmen monitoring family life to make sure that America's little ones are treated with due respect. This, then, is the true aim of today's Renaissance folks: to impose their views, witless and obnoxious though they may be, on everyone else, friend and foe alike. It is what we should learn to expect from the likes of Bill and Al, Ed and Alan, Diane and Rosie, Susan and The Dersh, Teddy and Walter, and all the others so eager to lecture us, interfere in our lives, and generally bore us to death—and particularly from Hillary, whose book, although a best-seller, was inaccurately titled. It should properly have been called *It Takes a Fraud—and Other Lessons We Learn From Phonies.*

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A Round Table Discussion

The 225th Anniversary Of The Declaration Of Independence

H. Ward Sterett

"We Hold These Truths"

by Stephen B. Presser

Is the Declaration of Independence part of the federal Constitution? The short answer, of course, is "no." For the Declaration to be part of the Constitution, it would have to have been included in the original document ratified by at least nine of the conventions held in the original 13 states between 1787 and 1789, or added by amendment, which requires a two-thirds vote of both houses of Congress and the assent of three quarters of the state legislatures. The Declaration was never ratified by either method. It is also possible to add amendments through a new national constitutional convention, with ratification by state legislatures, but this has never happened.

Some political theorists claim that the principles of the Declaration were incorporated into the Constitution during the Civil War, through some quasi-magical amendment process conjured up, through executive fiat, by President Lincoln. This occurred sometime around when he extraconstitutionally emancipated the slaves in the states that had seceded from the Union or, perhaps, when he delivered the Gettysburg Address. Some law professors have sought to find an incorporation of the Declaration through the Reconstruction amendments; while it is true that those amendments did bring us closer to some ideas found in the Declaration, they could not—either explicitly or implicitly—make the Declaration part of the Constitution.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to conclude that the Declaration has no relevance for interpreting the Constitution, and as we celebrate the Declaration's 225th anniversary, it is useful to remember just what the Declaration was and how it relates to the Constitution.

The Resolution of Independence from Great Britain, which preceded the Declaration, was an act of the representatives of the 13 colonies and might properly be viewed as the act of 13 newly sovereign states. These states were the entities that ratified the federal Constitution in 1789, and while the states' representatives certainly approved of the Declaration, the Declaration itself held no constitutional force. As Jefferson (or whoever drafted the phrase) made clear, the Declaration was the submission of "facts" to a "candid world" to support the decision to break with our mother country. It was an explanation of a political act and might be regarded today as something similar to legislative history; that is, we might consider it helpful in interpreting what happened, but it has no independent force of law. Or we might think of it simply as propaganda—seriously trumped-up charges against Parliament and the king calculated to secure the aid of the French and other European powers in

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our struggle with England.

The validity of some of the facts alleged in the Declaration is doubtful, though it does contain some timeless philosophical truths—truths that touch constitutional interpretation. One is the notion that whatever rights we have in a temporal government must ultimately be viewed as the gift of "Nature's God," Who regards all men as equal in His sight: not equal in terms of abilities, entitlements to worldly goods, or accomplishments, but with a claim to be treated equally *under the law*. This notion of equality before the law, and nothing more grandiose, is what was meant by the 14th Amendment's guarantee of "equal protection," "due process," and "privileges and immunities" to all Americans. The Declaration should not be viewed, as some have urged, as a device for the easy removal of contract and property rights, or for redistribution of wealth to achieve equality of result.

In its confirmation of equality before the Creator, the Declaration did not exhaust the natural-law foundations of any legal system—those that have been recognized since the time of Aristotle and Cicero, on through Aquinas, and by Burke and the Framers themselves. These include the guarantee that your property will not be taken without just compensation, that you cannot be punished for an act that was not a crime when you committed it, and that you cannot be both judge and party in your own case. Some of these are now express constitutional guarantees, but Supreme Court Justice Salmon Chase believed—as did Blackstone and Coke—that these limitations were fundamental aspects of any government—monarchy, aristocracy, or republic—that purported to be bound by the rule of law. Natural law is part of the foundation of our Constitution, as of every legitimate constitution, but the words of the Declaration have no continuing legal or constitutional status. <c>

"All Men Are Created Equal"

by Clyde Wilson

"When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another . . . " The necessity has occurred. The 13 colonies have a long history as self-governing societies, a condition that is now threatened. As all governments derive their just powers from the *consent* of the governed, the people have a right to alter or abolish a government whenever it becomes destructive to those who have given their consent. The occasion calls for a statement of rights violated, in the good old English tradition of the Magna Carta and the Glorious Revolution. Therefore, "these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES." There you have it: the sovereignty and self-government of existing societies. Of course, as is always the case in human events, the Declaration still had to be made good by bayonets wielded by free men.

Mr. Jefferson drafted a legal document to be adopted (or not) by 13 sovereign states. He was not Moses releasing a prophecy. Contrary to befuddled scholars, he did not get his fillip about equality from reading French books. It came from his belief in the self-governing equality of the colonists' primitive Anglo-Saxon ancestors before they succumbed to Norman centralism. "All men are created equal" meant that a Briton on this side of the water is just as good as a Briton on the other side, a second son is just as good as the firstborn, and that no man is entitled, as the author said on another occasion, by birth "to ride booted and spurred over his fellows." Aristocrats were to be identified, as he said on yet another occasion, not by birth but by talents and services.

Every thoughtful American of the 19th century feared (oftentimes openly) that "all men are created equal" was a cannon that might break loose on the deck and destroy everything in its path—particularly after the French Revolution endowed the minds of a great number of Westerners with a vision of the Rights of Man bestowed by a centralized, self-justifying state.

On this side of the water, there were several effects. First, the disintegration of New England Puritanism spawned utopian and blasphemous Transcendentalism and various enthusiastic religious cults. The thrust of these phenomena was to create a popular ideology which lumped together God's plan for the universe and the New Man's destiny of perfection with America's destiny as the trailblazer for mankind (at least the *New England* version of America). In an 1844 public letter to American leaders, Mormon founder Joseph Smith argued that the Declaration justified the federal government's authority to overrule the states on behalf of his beleaguered sect.

Second, among the Germans, the French Revolution sired a bastard offspring: an ideology even more abstract, ruthless, and state-worshipping than the original. The human debris of the failed European Revolutions of 1848 poured into the free confederacy in America, which they mistakenly assumed was the embodiment of their version of the Rights of Man. It is easy to demonstrate that, demographically, the Puritans and Forty-Eighters, along with ruthless economic exploiters, diverted politics out of its accustomed paths in the Midwest and helped elect Abraham Lincoln to the presidency by a 40 percent vote.

At Gettysburg, Lincoln declared that the Declaration had created a "nation," not free and independent states. Specifically, it produced a nation dedicated to the proposition of equality, presumably justifying its pursuit by any means. Massive battalions made the reinterpretation stick. Contrary to what countless mountebanks have proclaimed since, Lincoln was not proclaiming the equality of African-Americans, which was never a sincere goal and was soon forgotten. He was proclaiming that the French Revolution had replaced the American Founding. Anyone who looks honestly at the Union's war will see that, aside from a few pretty speeches, it was justified in terms of blood-and-iron nationalism—an indestructible government.

Consent, the central idea of 1776, was gone. It could be given only once; from then on, the Union was forever binding. This was not the recurrent process portrayed in the Declaration.

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The people were no longer the center; the government was. The plural United *States* was now an artificial singular. "American," which had meant the fellow feeling of related peoples, now meant merely obedience to the same government.

Americans have never lost the idea of, and the instinct for, equality—and that is a good thing. But we appear to have lost the idea of, and the instinct for, *freedom* and *independence*. Can we recover them? The prospects are not good, but stranger things have happened in history.

"Dedicated to the Proposition"

by Donald W. Livingston

A gay activist recently claimed on national television that legal rejection of gay "marriages" violates the Declaration of Independence, while an ACLU member insisted that posting the Ten Commandments in a courtroom was a violation not only of the Bill of Rights but of the Declaration. Though absurd, these positions logically follow from the dominant liberal interpretation of the document. Its claim that all men are "created equal" and are endowed with "unalienable rights" to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," has been treated as the sole meaning of the document, which—in this view—underwrites a radical ethic of individualism. In this way, the Declaration privileges the liberty of individuals over the corporate liberty of the people of a state to protect a valuable way of life, which includes authoritative interpretations of what the rights of individuals are. This Lockean reading of the Declaration is then read into the Constitution as its animating principle—despite the obvious fact that the Constitution was designed to protect the reserved corporate liberty of the states against encroachment by enumerating the powers granted by those states to the newly created central government. The language of "natural rights" does not appear in the ancient Greek and Roman traditions, nor in the Bible, nor in the Constitution: The only individual rights specified there are traditional English common-law rights (no *ex post facto* laws, etc.). Americans, of course, had strong beliefs about individual rights; but they left their exposition and interpretation largely up to the states. Still, we are told that America is a "Lockean" nation. And so Mortimer Adler could write a popular book on the Constitution with the title *We Hold These Truths*.

The Declaration is a *secession* document justifying the corporate liberty of 13 distinct political societies to break the "political bands" that had connected them with another "people" and to govern themselves. But what seceded was not the American people in the aggregate (as the "Lockean" reading would have it). The Declaration begins with an assertion of *corporate liberty* and ends with the ringing claim that 13 distinct political societies—hitherto colonies—are now to be recognized individually as "free and independent states." If liberals do not understand what the Declaration asserted, his Britannic majesty did: In the Treaty of Paris, he acknowledged each former colony *by name* to be a free, sovereign, and independent state.

The Declaration, then, is not about an aggregate of atomistic Lockean individuals uniting to secure their individual self-interest, but historically pre-existing political societies, each seeking to establish (out of its desired sovereignty) legal protection for what it considers a valuable way of life. But what about the abstract proposition that "all men are created equal?" It is just that: an *abstraction*. Without a moral and religious tradition to interpret it—with all its contingency and particularity—it is entirely empty and cannot serve to guide any conduct whatsoever.

Consider the metric system. The length and weight of anything in the universe can be measured with it. Further, the connection between a meter and 100 centimeters is "unalienable." Yet the system cannot actually measure anything until we know how *long* a meter is. A meter could be the length of Napoleon's left hand or the length of Josephine's favorite hairpin: In either case, it would equal 100 centimeters. To know the length of the standard meter, we must accept a *story* told by *authority* about the selection, by *authorities*, of a *particular* iridium bar encased in Paris. Not even in the rationalistic metric system can we escape the contingencies and particularities of tradition. Philosophers may prove God's existence through self-evident argument, but we still need the biblical and Church tradition as the guide to man's relation to God.

The same is true of the abstract natural rights of the Declaration. To say, as liberals on the left *and* right tirelessly do, that America is an "idea" rather than a culture, or that ours is a "proposition country," is like saying that the metric system is not like other systems of measurement (which have a traditionally determined standard of measurement), but instead is merely an idea or set of abstract principles. It is always morally corrupting to think we are guided by what is, in fact, impossible.

The Framers were, at times, given to rationalistic language, and Jefferson uses it in the Declaration. But his main object is not the propounding of an abstract proposition but an affirmation of the corporate liberty of 13 states, each with its own *particular* moral and religious tradition. Jefferson and his contemporaries well understood that the content of natural rights would have its source in those distinct traditions. It would not be until the 1830's, when the founding generation had died out, that a new, aggressive breed of Americans would appear, bent on centralization and speaking the French revolutionary language of nationalism. They reconceived the abstract natural rights of the Declaration as standing on their own, and used them (with all the arbitrariness that empty abstractions allow) to destroy the moral and religious traditions of those very states the Declaration had said should be independent.

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Becoming George Orwell

by George McCartney

"The best guesser is the best prophet."

—Greek Proverb

H. Ward Sterett

Orwell: Wintry Conscience of a Generation
by Jeffrey Meyers
New York: W.W. Norton & Company; 320 pp., $29.95

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George Orwell was born Eric Arthur Blair in 1903 in Motihari, India, where his father worked for the Indian Civil Service as a sub-deputy opium agent in charge of manufacturing the narcotic for transport to China. His mother, the daughter of a French teak merchant and boatbuilder, had grown up in a lavish colonial household in Burma. Ancestors on both sides had made small fortunes in India and Jamaica by virtue of cheap (and slave) labor.

In short, the man who became George Orwell entered the world a beneficiary of a corrupt and often ruthless imperialism. His parents never questioned the morality of this exploitation of the less fortunate. Neither did Blair as a young man, when he still considered "Mandalay," Rudyard Kipling's sentimental ode to the exotic Orient, the best poem in the language. After graduating from Eton, rather than continuing his education at Oxford or Cambridge with his peers, he followed in his father's footsteps, serving the British Empire's interests as an assistant superintendent of police in Burma from 1922 to 1927.

From this morally compromised background, Blair emerged as the "wintry conscience of a generation," the epitaph V.S. Pritchett bestowed on him—and which Jeffrey Meyers has aptly chosen for the subtitle of his new and immensely clarifying biography, *Orwell*. Pritchett's phrase comes from the opening sentences of his obituary for Orwell; he goes on to identify the generation in question as the one that "in the thirties had heard the call to the rasher assumptions of political faith." These "rasher assumptions" were the totalitarian siren songs of fascism and communism to which so many of Orwell's contemporaries succumbed while he, despite his revolutionary sympathies, steadfastly resisted. Like his contemporary (and political opposite), Evelyn Waugh, Orwell knew these were equally hideous. Even during World War II, when Russia allied with England against Germany, he never shrank from proclaiming that both communism and Nazism threatened what mattered most in human life: liberty and decency. Although he called himself a socialist, Orwell refused to go along with others on the left who were willing to overlook the "sins" of Soviet-style communism in order to combat the horrors of fascism.

Orwell's stance provoked unusually strong reactions, especially from those who knew communism from the inside. They either revered or reviled him. Former communist Arthur Koestler called him the "missing link between Kafka and Swift." In 1953, the Nobel Prize-winning Polish poet Czeslaw Milosz reported that Orwell's *1984* fascinated the members of the Soviet Inner Party: They could not fathom how an outsider had gained such insight into daily life under their system. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russian philosopher Grigori Pomerantz also noted Orwell's uncanny grasp of conditions under communism. "Orwell, who got his education at Eton and on the streets of colonial Burma, understood the soul, or soullessness, of our society better than anyone else." Marxists, on the other hand, have taken a different line. When *Animal Farm* and *1984* first appeared, they were so flus-

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tered by Orwell's exposure of totalitarian governance that they resorted to name-calling: maggot, hyena, swine, neurotic, and worse. This pleased Orwell, for, as Meyers notes, their childish spluttering "made [him] feel he must have struck home."

For an author who was subjected to so much naming, no one did it as well Eric Blair himself. He decided to use a pen name for his first book, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933), fearing his autobiographical report on living with the lower classes might embarrass his family. In retrospect, however, it is difficult not to read into his decision other intentions: Who could be more virtuously English than George, the island's patron saint, Edmund Spenser's Red Cross Knight? And Orwell is the name of a river running from Ipswich to the North Sea, a part of the English countryside Blair loved so much. Not by design—he was too unassuming for that—but perhaps by instinct, Blair aligned himself with a legendary knight by defending his country from the ideological dragons of the 20th century.

Orwell's decision to write under a pseudonym is suggestive in another way: It is the mark of his self-invention. He was not a natural writer. He had neither Waugh's elegance nor Aldous Huxley's learning, the novelists with whom he is most often grouped today. Ruth Pitter, a poet and family friend, described his first efforts as being "like a cow with a musket." What drove Orwell to make himself an effective writer was his unblinking moral vision. As a member of what he sardonically called "the lower-upper-middle class" and a beneficiary of an oppressive imperial system, he felt it his duty to tell the truth to his countrymen and help end the injustices that were everywhere hiding in the miasma of unquestioned convention. In *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), he wrote of the "immense weight of guilt" he needed to expiate:

> I felt that I had got to escape not merely from imperialism but from every form of man's dominion over man. . . . What I profoundly wanted . . . was to find some way of getting out of the respectable world altogether.

This he did from 1928 to 1931, first becoming a restaurant dishwasher in Paris and then returning to England to join the homeless tramping from town to town, looking for handouts or work. By recording these experiences in *Down and Out*, he began to create the George Orwell we now regard as the moral voice of his age, a role that seems to have pleased and embarrassed him in equal measures. Turning up at his friends' homes in vaguely proletarian attire, he endured a certain amount of teasing for wearing his social conscience on his fraying sleeve. Cyril Connolly, his friend from Eton, once remarked that he "could not blow his nose without moralising on conditions in the handkerchief industry." But Orwell gave as good as he got. While at Connolly's home one night, Peter Quennell stopped by on his way to a more exalted occasion for which he was wearing formal evening dress. "So you still wear the uniform of the class enemy," Orwell teased his friend.

The work in which Orwell most memorably dramatized the chilling consequences of "man's dominion over man" was his last, *1984*. Its phenomenal success (over 40 million copies sold in more than 60 languages, according to Meyers) has made Orwell's name an adjective, frequently used by people who have never read the book. "Orwellian" stands for the routine, casual abuse of bureaucratic power by those who expect ordinary citizens to bow uncomplainingly to official authority and big money. Along with his name, Orwell's terms of political injustice have passed into our common vocabulary: thoughtcrime, doublethink, memory-hole, unperson, thought police, Big Brother, and more. No other writer has so successfully sensitized us to language's political undercurrents. Without Orwell, would we have taken as much notice as we did when Stanley Fish of Duke University arrogantly coined the term "politically correct," using it to indicate his leftward litmus test of academic worthiness?

I have found *1984* a useful gauge of character. I first discovered this over 20 years ago when a colleague of mine noticed I had assigned the novel to one of my undergraduate classes.

"You're not still teaching that?" he asked incredulously. "Our students are really too sophisticated for it, you know."

"Yes, I suppose you're right," I agreed, "if you mean the word in its original sense. There's little doubt their minds have been shamefully sophisticated by what passes for education today."

Until that moment, I had not really thought much about my colleague one way or the other. He had always seemed a nice enough, competent young fellow. But now he stood revealed as a gullibly softheaded victim of changing intellectual fashions. It was apparent that he had been all-too-easily sophisticated—that is, traduced—by Marxist propaganda. From the moment Orwell showed up on their radar, the far left had been doing everything possible to portray him as a misanthropic crank who had cravenly betrayed his youthful revolutionary idealism. That they succeeded at all with this transparent slander has always astonished me.

As Meyers explains clearly and in indisputable detail, the communists first took aim at Orwell in 1938, while he was fighting on their side in Spain against Franco's forces. Since he presented himself as an independent-minded socialist, they judged him "politically unreliable," meaning he refused to subscribe to the Stalinist line. For this "crime," they scheduled him for assassination; a sniper shot him in the neck. (The communists have always denied this, but Meyers proves their treachery with documents from Soviet files and with fascinating interviews with two aging British communist participants in the Spanish Civil War.) After partially recovering from his wound, he and his wife—who had joined him in Barcelona—had to flee for their lives to Paris. The communists had targeted not only them but all the anti-Franco forces with whom they were supposedly allied. Saving the nascent Spanish Republic obviously came second to political correctness. Those who did not bend to their will were deemed Trotskyites and slated for torture and liquidation.

Over the years, the reds became increasingly enraged that they had failed to eliminate the man who became one of their most potent critics. After Spain, Orwell made it his life's mission to unmask the communist cause for the ghastly sham it was. His success is everywhere evident. Orwell has become an honored hero of both the right and the anticommunist left. His works played a substantial role in undermining the Soviet system. Meyers reminds us that, when Pope John Paul II was archbishop of Krakow in 1977, he allowed a lecture entitled "Orwell's 1984 and Contemporary Poland" to be delivered in church, despite the government's ban. In 1984, the Solidarity Movement issued a clandestine Orwell stamp and distributed illegal editions of *Animal Farm* and *1984*. If taking up arms in

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Spain had been rashly quixotic, Orwell lived to settle matters with his pen. In the end, his works would help discomfit the totalitarianism he so despised.

Orwell triumphed because he refused to be sophisticated by what he called in 1940 "the smelly little orthodoxies which are now contending for our souls." Meyers enables us to understand the origins of Orwell's resistance to changing political fashions. Everything in his varied life had taught him that what passes for sophistication is all too often the kind of rationalization that permits people to behave unspeakably. He had witnessed firsthand sophisticated ideologues justifying torture and murder to achieve their goals. But it was not just ideologues. While an imperial policeman, Orwell had abused the Burmese, justifying himself on grounds of necessity: There was no other way to maintain colonial order. He even beat his native servants. "I had hit them with my fist in moments of rage," he would later confess, adding by way of extenuation that "orientals can be very provoking." Orwell's knowledge of political brutality and intolerance was never merely theoretical: He knew what people were capable of.

From these experiences, Orwell concluded that, once people are pried from their unsophisticated belief in moral absolutes that transcend political expedience, they are all too ready to do whatever those in power bid. As O'Brien, the Grand Inquisitor of *1984*, explains to the thoughtcriminal Winston Smith, a well-run state requires that truth be a politically managed consensus rather than an objective reality. In other words, if you can get people to believe in anything, you can get them to *do* anything—sell dope to the indigent, shoot the politically unreliable, or drop bombs on innocent populations. In such a world, concentration camps and gulags come as no surprise. Although a professed atheist, Orwell was honest enough not to duck this issue. In 1949, he addressed it from his deathbed with a directness worthy of the staunchly Roman Catholic Waugh: "The problem of the world is this: Can we get men to behave decently to each other if they no longer believe in God?"

At its heart, *1984* is much more than a political novel. It is a profound investigation into epistemological and theological questions that have bedeviled us throughout history—and with special urgency in our age, when belief has foundered and many intellectuals have concluded that objective truth is merely a nostalgic mirage. These sophisticates have convinced themselves that we have no certain knowledge of anything beyond the signs and symbols we create, a condition that licenses the *cognoscenti* to do consciously what they believe human beings have always done unconsciously—namely, invent their own reality. This is the message O'Brien preaches. Having accepted the premise that there is no reality except that which is "within the skull," he puts forth a doctrine of collective solipsism in which the totalitarian state is the ultimate arbiter of truth. History, science, morality—they must all submit to the needs of government. Winston argues desperately against this perverse philosophy. He wants to believe that there is some standard of truth external to the human will, some absolutely fixed fulcrum upon which human beings might exert the lever of their individuality against the juggernaut of the state. Without belief in God, however, he finds he can only appeal impotently to the "Spirit of Man," a will-o'-the-wisp O'Brien has no trouble brushing away.

By convincing Winston that two plus two equals five, O'Brien presses state propaganda to its logically absurd conclusion. Governments have always striven to convince their citizens that nonsense is truth and viciousness is moral. National leaders of the last century convinced their citizens that sacrificing lives in the tens of millions was necessary to achieve utopia. More recently, we have endured a leader who had no compunction about informing us that the meaning of "is" is endlessly disputable and that killing healthy unborn children, far from being an unspeakable crime, is nothing less than an unimpeachable moral right. These are the dehumanizing consequences of O'Brien's brand of sophisticated atheism.

As Meyers amply demonstrates, Orwell was a sworn enemy of O'Brien's sophistication well before writing *1984*. He fought intellectual sophistry on every front, at the risk of prosperity, health, and even life itself. He stood for individual liberty against what he perceived to be an increasingly machine-regimented life in the 20th century and shunned what George Bowling, his protagonist in *Coming Up for Air* (1939), calls the ersatz, streamlined world of modern life. Like Gordon Comstock, the protagonist of his second novel, *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936), he was immune to the blandishments of urban, middle-class existence. During his final ten years (when he was most at risk from the tuberculosis that would kill him in 1950), he chose to live in a primitive cottage in Wallington before moving on to Jura, a sparsely populated, inhospitable island off the Scottish coast. He needed to play the role of the prophet who retreats to the wilderness in order to see his society accurately.

As many have pointed out, Orwell's prophecies did not come true. He never intended, however, to foretell the future. He was a prophet in the sense that he revealed the immoral tendencies of his time, exaggerating what he had witnessed as an agent of British imperialism and a wartime propagandist for the BBC. And perhaps the political nightmare he imagined never materialized precisely because *1984* was published. His cautionary vision may have put the world on alert.

Meyers has done a superbly thorough job of presenting the flawed, difficult man who was born Eric Blair, a man seriously divided within himself. As Blair, he had enjoyed the perks of imperialism, including the services of menials and young prostitutes cheaply available to a Brit in Burma; as Orwell, he hated himself for participating in a colonial system that degraded both the ruled and the ruler. As Blair, he did not refrain from caning his students during his brief stint at schoolmastering in Middlesex; as Orwell, he despised bullying in all its forms. As Blair, he yearned to smash fascist faces; as Orwell, he railed against the brutality that war permits. This Jekyll-and-Hyde tension, though it must have been uncomfortable, is hardly unusual, especially in creative minds. Would Joseph Conrad have been so effective in unmasking the squalid egoism underlying romantic idealism had he not been drawn to it himself? Would Waugh have been as effective a critic of technological modernity had he not gadded about on motorcycles and parachuted from planes? We all harbor contradictory urges, but artists feel them more urgently. This is why they are compelled to resolve them in their art.

Eric Blair never lived under totalitarianism, but he did harbor autocratic impulses that enabled him to recognize intuitively the consequences of absolute power. To deal with his inner conflict, he became George Orwell—to the inestimable benefit of everyone living today and, I hope, to those who will come after us.

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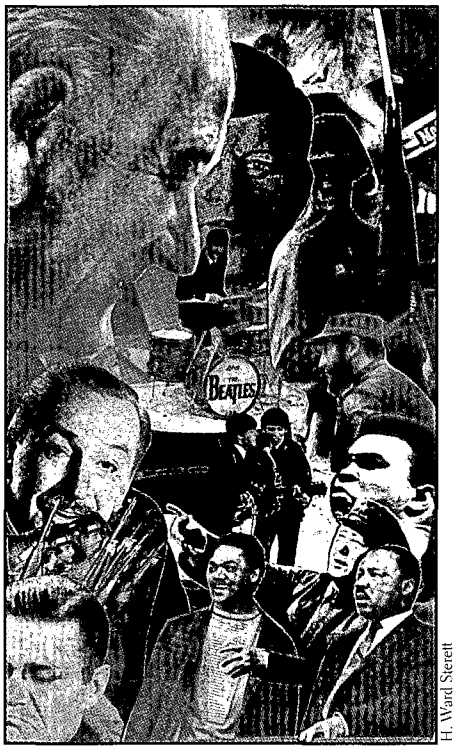
Thirty Years Ago . . .

by Thomas Fleming

"History is philosophy from examples."
—Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ars Rhetorica*

Reflections on a Disruptive Decade: Essays From the Sixties
by Eugene Davidson
Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press; 245 pp., $29.95



H. Ward Sterett

The "disruptive decade" referred to in the title of this collection of essays is the 1960's, when Eugene Davidson served as editor of *Modern Age*. Although the 60's ended only 30 years ago, Mr. Davidson's writing (the prefatory editorials to each issue of the conservative quarterly journal) breathes the spirit of a different world and of a different kind of American conservatism from that we have grown used to in the intervening years. These essays—mature, informed, and balanced—are written with a coherence and lucidity that put the author more on a level with Paul Elmer More and Albert Jay Nock than with either the glib editorialists of New York magazines or the perpetual graduate students of conservative academe.

A German historian by profession and the former head of Yale University Press, Eugene Davidson is best known as the author of two splendid volumes on the making and unmaking of Adolph Hitler and the Nazi Party. Republished by the University of Missouri Press, these books are not only fair-minded and judicious distillations of research but classic history narrated with the sure touch of a master storyteller. Still, Mr. Davidson also found time to be the first successor to Russell Kirk, the founding editor of *Modern Age*.

The range of interests displayed in this collection is unusually broad, from the favorite themes of Cold War conservatism—the Soviet Union and the betrayal of liberal intellectuals—to his own specialty (the Third Reich), to contemporary concerns about civil rights and racial conflict. He tackles every subject with a moderation and restraint that was once regarded as the hallmark of the "conservative mind." On what was then called the "Negro question," Davidson took a moderately liberal position, acknowledging that wrong had been done while questioning the price (to be paid by black as well as white Americans) of the proposed remedies. In a 1963 editorial, "Black and White," he draws attention to the curious fact that black academics from the Caribbean are as literate and competent as their white colleagues, while the writing of black American scholars is often "illiterate and confused." He concludes that integration is obviously a good thing, but

> an integration that lies outside court decisions and the automatic rifles of the federal marshals and the army. It is an integration by voluntary association, by individual action, by way of self-discipline and by content. The Negro in the United States has the same right and need to be judged and treated as an individual as anyone else, to attend, if he is qualified, the best schools and universities in the country, but he himself bears the responsibility for forwarding the changes in the segregationist tradition by his own performance, his own contribution to the society, and for this honorable goal he will have countless white allies.

By 1969, however, Davidson had become convinced that black intellectuals were, for the most part, following a different path: the whining self-justification and abnegation of personal responsibility advocated by "revolutionaries." He shrewdly deduced that these cowardly and self-dramatizing rebels were the advance guard of a broader movement:

> With the Negroes in American colleges demanding freedom from white tutelage, keeping to themselves, looking to themselves to win their place in a white environment despite the attempts of the authorities and of undergraduates to break through the barriers and to return to the good old arm-linking days, we have obviously come to a new

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phase of the race problem and one that will not be as accessible to the television cameras. These dissident Negroes, like their dead heroes, Malcolm X and Dr. Fanon, reject the white society lock, stock, and barrel although they make use of its opportunities, and by their violent rejection of it they become an *avant garde* not only of Negroes but of the radical white wing that has no revolutionary drama about them. They are in fact in the front line of the left-wing environmentalists [in the psychological sense] who believe we can change anything we will to change, aptitudes, intelligence, athletic ability—all we have to do is to expend enough energy and money and transform our economic and political system, and the job will be done.

Eugene Davidson displayed prescience on the evils of affirmative action and multiculturalism that would sweep through universities in the 70's like the plagues of Egypt; he also saw through the false claims made at the Nuremberg Trials. Some of his best editorials were devoted to Albert Speer (an essay also collected in George Panichas's fine anthology of *Modern Age* articles, published by Liberty Press) and to the "prisoner of Spandau"—Rudolph Hess, the last Nazi leader to remain in prison. Hess was already delusional when he flew to Britain on his famous peace mission, and he soon lapsed into what appears to be genuine insanity with intermittent periods of remission. Although considerations of both justice and mercy dictated Hess's liberation, our gallant Soviet allies insisted upon his continued incarceration. This was the same Soviet government that had demanded the prosecution of the Germans for the murder of Polish officers in the Katyn Forest, knowing full well that the Poles had been killed by the Soviets, not the Nazis.

Hess left Germany in 1941, before Hitler invaded Russia and at a time when communists and their leftist stooges were still openly collaborating with the Nazis. His crime was the novel Nuremberg charge of conspiracy to wage war, and the evidence included a military-conscription bill he had signed in 1935. "How could it be criminal," asks Davidson, "for any member of a government . . . to sign a bill establishing compulsory military service when every country in Europe had conscription?" The hypocrisy should have been particularly evident in the postwar world in which dozens of nations were routinely conducting aggressive wars and committing war crimes with scarcely a peep from the "international community."

Davidson drew the obvious conclusion:

> The Allies who put him in prison have long since abandoned any notion of bringing post-Nuremberg aggressors to trial . . . Only this extraordinary precedent of the case of Rudolph Hess, who flew off to stop the war and so landed in prison for the rest of his life, remains, for a time at least, a living reminder of the mental aberrations of those presumably sane people in high places who were building a world order of law and peace no wider than the Nuremberg courtroom.

This was not his last or only word on the hypocrisy of Nuremberg. Davidson's *The Trial of the Germans* (1966, republished in 1997 by University of Missouri Press) is a masterpiece of balanced historical analysis. After an introductory chapter on the trial itself, Davidson takes up, chapter by chapter, the individuals and groups (e.g., militarists, diplomats, and bureaucrats) who were on trial; the whole book is written so well that it might serve as an introduction to the Nazi movement. Davidson never minces words on the sins of the defendants, but he is equally careful to stick to actual facts and to the legal grounds of the prosecution. In a few pages, he deflates Goering's vanity, delineates his crimes, and acknowledges the validity of some of his legal argumentation. Cautiously concluding that Nuremberg was better than a lynching, he nonetheless challenges the grounds of the tribunal, pointing out that only losers may be indicted in such a trial and conceding a central point of the German defense: that individuals cannot "commit a crime against international law, which is binding upon states."

In his 1969 editorial on Hess, Davidson had more than indicated the hypocrisy of continuing to speak of the Nuremberg principle while tolerating war crimes committed in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and Southeast Asia. *The Nuremberg Fallacy* (first published in 1973 and republished by the University of Missouri Press in 1998) follows up on this hint and documents the war crimes being committed by the Soviet Union and all parties to the Middle East and Southeast Asian conflicts. This book may be the nearest thing to a balanced account of the conflicts of the 1950's and 60's. He does not attempt to minimize the wrongs done by his own government (though the evidence of American complicity in the murder of the Diems is fairly certain) and its French allies in Vietnam, but he is also the very opposite of the type that has come to be known as "blame America first." He is merciless on the Soviet Union's crimes, but in narrating and analyzing those brutal conflicts, he never loses sight of his central purpose: to expose the Nuremberg fallacy.

Thirty years ago, even Davidson probably did not realize that a triumphalist America would resurrect Nuremberg in the form of The Hague Tribunal and apply—almost exclusively to one side of a three-way civil war—the principles that had been used to convict and execute the architects of the Third Reich. The Nazi leaders were, admittedly, a hard case to ignore; but, as the legal proverb goes, hard cases make bad law, and the American propaganda of the past ten years seems to make it impossible to walk away from the evil precedent. Conservatives and liberals who wish to understand these matters can spend their time on nothing better than Eugene Davidson's essays and histories, and we owe a profound debt of gratitude to the University of Missouri Press for making them available. <©>

Other works by Eugene Davidson
(All titles are published by the University of Missouri Press)

The Death & Life of Germany: An Account of the American Occupation
456 pp., $19.95

The Nuremberg Fallacy
334 pp., $29.95

The Trial of the Germans: An Account of the Twenty-two Defendants Before the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg
696 pp., $24.95

The Making of Adolf Hitler: The Birth and Rise of Nazism
464 pp., $19.95

The Unmaking of Adolf Hitler
536 pp., $29.95

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Come, Sweet Death

by Harold O.J. Brown

Culture of Death:
The Assault on Medical Ethics in America
by Wesley J. Smith
San Francisco: Encounter Books;
244 pp., $23.95

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In the spring of 1975, C. Everett Koop, M.D., addressed a conference of Christian laymen in New Orleans on the topic of abortion—more specifically, on the implications of *Roe* v. *Wade*. Among the changes he foresaw were a growing acceptance of infanticide as the "treatment of choice" for defective newborns and an increasing resort to euthanasia. All of these things evolved within the context of a modern/postmodern world that no longer takes seriously the biblical teaching that human beings are made in the image of their Creator (Genesis 1:26).

After Dr. Koop, the connection between abortion and euthanasia—which Prof. Hans Millendorfer of Vienna called "methods in which killing represents a solution"—was stressed by other authorities, some equally eminent, others less so. The pro-abortion forces constantly denied it—at least then. Now the infanticide of "defective" newborns has become common, usually by simple neglect and deprivation of nourishment, and euthanasia is on the march. Britain legalized abortion in 1968; soon afterward, the *Spectator* predicted that "The abortion wave of the 'sixties will be the euthanasia wave of the 'eighties." It may not have come to pass so quickly in Britain, but in the United States we can fairly say that the abortion wave of the 70's has led to a euthanasia wave of the 90's. In the 21st century, the abortion wave is still washing over us, and the tide of euthanasia is rising.

In *Culture of Death*, Wesley J. Smith, an attorney for the International Anti-Euthanasia Task Force and a leading writer on medical ethics, identifies the growing prevalence of euthanasia as a "treatment of choice" in an ever-broadening range of "cases" (human beings), and demonstrates what the acceptance of euthanasia has already done to medical ethics and where these developments are heading.

In 1982, Prof. Charles Liechtenthaler, a German physician and historian of medicine, wrote in "The Oath of Hippocrates" that "Our old ethical fixed stars are no longer visible. We are wandering in an ethical no-man's-land." Mr. Smith's work shows us just how wide and barren this land has become. The Hippocratic Oath, with its vow neither to perform an abortion nor to give a patient a deadly remedy (even on request), was already rendered "inoperative" by the abortion culture. Now, its even more fundamental principle, "*Primum non nocere*" ("First, do no harm"), is all but forgotten. The former rationale for the promotion of euthanasia was mercy, which seemed so plausible at the time that its advocates did not shun the term "mercy killing." Recently, as the term "killing" could not be purged of its unpleasantness, and as "patient autonomy" came to be a watchword, "physician-assisted suicide" has become the expression of choice. Of course, Mr. Smith is aware of the connection between abortion and euthanasia, but he explicitly avoids all reference to the former topic, apparently in the hope of gaining a hearing for his views on euthanasia without entangling them in the ongoing abortion debates.

On visits to the United States, both Pope John Paul II and the late Mother Teresa evoked the idea of a "culture of death." Smith, having adopted the term for his book, shows that what was a prophecy of doom not so long ago is now a reality, and well on the way to becoming routine. Writing as though he hopes that his book will reach a wide public, Smith makes use of many touching personal anecdotes, damaged lives ready to be given over to a convenient death by overworked or overzealous health-care personnel. Some of these lives were saved by bucking the medical system, while others were lost because the system prevailed, or because their condition was hopeless and further care was futile. Although he writes soberly, Smith offers a gruesome vision of the future, which may explain why he has dedicated his book to "Ralph Nader: friend, mentor, visionary." (Perhaps this dedication will reassure concerned readers that Smith is not just a garden-variety, reactionary conservative.)

According to Dr. Koop, the study of medical ethics during his medical-school days consisted largely of "medical etiquette"—lessons in how to treat one's colleagues. Back then, the Hippocratic Oath was not merely a rote phrase recited at medical-school commencement ceremonies but was taken for granted across the profession—rather like the generic Protestant-Catholic-Jewish ethics of the larger society. Unfortunately, as has been the case in other areas of ethics (notably the sexual variety), things long taken for granted cannot long withstand the corrosive climate of postmodernity. In the absence of a powerful ethic based—like that of Hippocrates, Christianity, and Judaism—on the assurance of man being made in the image of God, the patient ceases to be a person possessed of a divinely endowed dignity and becomes a mere "case," considered in utilitarian terms.

The old legal proverb "Hard cases make bad law" seems to have a medical corollary: "Hard cases make bad medicine." Seventy-five years ago, as a noted French hematologist has written, medicine was relatively ineffective, but it was also relatively inexpensive. Now, it is vastly more effective but immensely more expensive. In the United States, medicine has virtually ceased to be a liberal profession and become just another aspect of commerce. Instead of being *hopeless*, hard cases have become *too expensive*, encouraging physicians to cut costs. In medicine, many cases—and virtually every case near the end of life—is deemed a hard case, and hard cases cost cold, hard cash—lots of it. The commercialization of medicine has led to an increased (if not altogether absolute) preoccupation with profit and, hence, with cost-effective practices. Traditional medical ethics made the patient's well-being the physician's first concern; the commercialization of medicine makes maximizing profit and limiting loss more important.

To this end, in the last decades of the 20th century, a concept called "futile-care theory" was developed. This concept drives the current assault on medical ethics in America, as Smith effectively demonstrates. The old Hippocratic ethic acknowledged that it is neither obligatory nor desirable to perform on patients proce-

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dures that will not benefit them. When "futile care" first appeared, many of us who are interested in medical ethics thought it merely a convenient way to state an old truth: Useless care is not required and should not be given. But in the interval between then and now, as Smith shows, futile care has taken on a dramatic new significance. The term has superseded the older word "mercy" as the slogan that increasingly justifies what we might call a utilitarian and cost-effective *coup de grâce* where hard cases are concerned.

In other words, futile care gives healthcare personnel power, first, to designate further treatment of a hard case as "futile," then to terminate it, thereby saving the funds that could have been expended on the patient (and perhaps pocketing some of the cash in the process). Smith argues persuasively that futile-care theory may be the tool that will finish off the Hippocratic ethic. Indeed, when medicine replaces the "*Primum non nocere*" of Hippocrates with Emperor Vespasian's "*Pecunia non olet*" ("Money doesn't stink"), then it will have replaced what Dr. Liechtenthaler called "ethical fixed stars" with the all-important bottom line.

To the concept of futile care is added that of "life not worth living." German euthanasia pioneers Karl Binding and Alfred Hoche introduced the term *lebensunwertes Leben* in their groundbreaking little book on euthanasia in 1920. For decades, it was regarded with revulsion in American circles as a rationalization for what the Nazi doctors did, first to ill and infirm Germans, then to Jews *en masse* in the gas chambers. In the 1930's, euthanasia was paired with eugenics as poor racial specimens were prevented from reproducing—or even from living. In the context of Nazism and World War II, both terms were considered abhorrent. Now, euthanasia is already socially acceptable, and eugenics is certainly likely to follow.

Smith devotes some attention to the growing power of the animal-rights movement, led by the newly installed Princeton University ethics professor Peter Singer and Ingrid Newkirk of PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals). This movement, broadly speaking, wants to grant animals rights resembling those that belong to humans. The act of preferring humans to other sentient beings is branded "speciesism" (a new word coined to facilitate the acceptance of animal rights). If the principle of animal rights is adopted, then the long-standing policy of performing experiments on laboratory animals before trying them on humans will be reversed. (To some extent, it already has been.) Of course, it is self-evident that, if animals are the same as humans, then humans are the same as animals and should be *treated* as animals (cared for and nurtured as long as they are useful, and quietly done away with when they are no longer productive). As an added advantage, the animal-rights movement may retard advances in medicine, thus making "futile care" ever more relevant.

The rejection of one key belief ties euthanasia, futile care for human beings, animal rights, survival of the fittest, and, ultimately, eugenics together: the biblical doctrine that man, male and female, is created in the image of God. Although Hippocrates was neither a Jew nor a Christian, this conviction grounded his ethic. And it is the rejection of the same conviction that ultimately will mean that, as Smith's book implies, "Anything goes."

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"Yes, Ma'am. And Will There Be Anything Else, Ma'am?"

by Paul Gottfried

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner Now? Multicultural Conservatives in America
by Angela D. Dillard
New York: New York University Press; 288 pp., $26.95

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According to Angela D. Dillard, "women and minority conservatives have begun to alter irrevocably the tone and complexion of contemporary conservatism." Despite the leftist affinity of most gays, blacks, Hispanics, and self-described feminists, "pariah minorities"—whom Dillard views as belonging to larger "outcast" groups—have come to identify with the American right. Consisting of independent (though misguided) spirits who have braved opposition (as in the case of Clarence Thomas) from both the media and minority organizations, multicultural conservatives are redefining what had been a white, Christian, and predominantly male enclave.

Dillard's categories are so expansive that, in the end, they explain very little. Even among blacks, it is hard to find much common ground between longtime John Bircher George Schuyler and moderate Republican J.C. Watts. Her methods are no more precise than her categories. Neoconservatives like Bruce Bauer, who became a gay advocate after coming out of the closet, are lumped together with staunch conservatives like Elizabeth Wright, Jay Parker, and Walter Williams—who happen to be black—and the homosexual neoliberal Andrew Sullivan is praised for his "Burkean conservatism" in prescribing homosexual marriage as a stabilizing structure for demoralized gays. Any conservative who might raise his eyebrows at the homosexual lobby is given the usual treatment (accused of "gay-bashing" and religious fanaticism), while Peter Brimelow, despite the measured, courteous language of *Alien Nation*, expresses "venom" in maliciously reconsidering pro-immigration rhetoric and legislation. (Brimelow, supposedly, is throwing red meat "to segments of the Right that remain inordinately fixated on race.") Inherent in American conservatism, Dillard explains, is a "desire to silence irreducible collectivities in the name of a constrictive and artificially singular American identity." Any attempt by blacks and other "pariah" groups to assume this identity renders them inauthentic and turns them into gate-crashing "parvenus." Dillard shares Toni Morrison's opinion that the pursuit by American blacks of the American "egalitarian dream" damages the "irreducible collectivity" of black identity. Of course, if that identity were "irreducible," it would make no difference *what* American dream blacks pursued for their collective advantage: A consciousness that cannot be taken apart remains always intact. What Dillard and Morrison really want is to create and nurture black solidarity in the face of a declared white majoritarian enemy—an enemy they totally dehumanize, according with a strategy Carl Schmitt associated with modern ideological conflict. It is one thing to view your group as antago-

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nistic toward another; it is something else to dismiss your antagonist as having no valid claim to a group identity and needing, therefore, to form a bogus "collectivity."

The willingness to accept such a contemptuous definition of white Christian society is what pervades multiculturalism and its multicultural conservative progeny, all of whom expend great effort to find some middle ground between the WASP self-loathing essential to multiculturalism and the conservative duty to perpetuate a cultural and political legacy. No matter how far the conservative movement bends or swerves toward the multicultural left, the accommodation will never be enough. (It is hardly as if that movement has not tried to *offer* enough, even to the point of expelling its own traditionalist wing.) The problem is, one can never catch up to the demands of those who regard the inherited civilization of the West and the descendants of those who built it with unmixed revulsion. Unlike the meritorious collectivities of designated victim groups, the identity Dillard believes the conservative movement is protecting is "constrictive" and "artificial." There can be no valid distinction, from her point of view, between sound and unsound conservatives: Good people are determined to cast aside Mosaic morality and open the floodgates to Third World immigration; bad people oppose this progress.

In reality, no such thing as "multicultural conservatism" could exist, but there are genuine black conservatives who defend the same positions white conservatives do. These are not inauthentic multiculturalists but cultural and religious Westerners who happen to be black. Elizabeth Wright, Jay Parker, and other black traditionalists have turned their backs on tribalist myths invented for designated victims. And though there can be conservatives who have not mastered their homosexual inclinations, there can be no conservatism that extols homosexual lifestyles—or treats them as anything but aberrant.

Finally, there is an unbridgeable gulf between Western conservatism and the politics of guilt. Although Western Christian civilization (from which the communists and Nazis fled) has, at its worst, behaved like other civilizations, it has also achieved an incomparable richness of forms. Out of respect for the West's conception of the spiritual worth of the individual, its invention of constitutional government, and its creation of almost inexhaustible wonders in philosophy, literature, and the arts and sciences, sane Westerners must feel pride in the civilization now being attacked by its ungrateful beneficiaries, as well as by outsiders. Although Americans are linked culturally and institutionally to their English cousins, it is not just the British part of the Western heritage that commands our admiration. All major European countries contributed remarkably to world civilization and (as Burke perceptively observed) produced overlapping, inventive rearrangements of the Hebrew, Christian, classical, and Germanic components of their identity. Why the heirs to these traditions should think they must don sackcloth and ashes to appease non-Westerners defies rational understanding. Unfortunately, what people like Dillard demand—namely, cultural and moral self-obliteration—Americans and Europeans are all too happy to provide.

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by Samuel Francis

The New Meaning of "Racism"

The tedium that descended upon the nation's politics last winter when Bush II ascended the presidential throne was relieved briefly in the waning days of the Clinton era by the bitter breezes that wafted around some of the new President's Cabinet appointments. After repeatedly muttering his meaningless campaign slogan, "I'm a uniter, not a divider," Mr. Bush suddenly found himself accused of the horrid and unpardonable offense of dividing when he nominated certain individuals of whom the real rulers of the country did not approve. "Uniting," as the former governor of Texas should have known and probably did know, means doing what the *Zeitgeist* (and those who craft it) want; "dividing" means doing what they don't want, and some of the cabinet nominees seemed for a short time to be the kind of undesirables who entertain ideas of their own and harbor sneaky inclinations to act on them. For a few weeks, it was uncertain whether the President would cave in to the demand of his political opponents in Congress and the mass media and dump the objectionable nominees or whether he and the nominees would contrive some means of placating their foes and persuading them they had no intention of bucking their wishes or challenging their power. What was never even contemplated, of course, was that the President and his prospective ministers would defy their critics and actually dare assert their own authority and leadership.

The most controversial of the Cabinet nominees was former Missouri Senator John Ashcroft, whose opposition to a Clinton-appointed black judge as well as several other thoughtcrimes immediately sparked the predictable accusations of "racism," "white supremacy," and "insensitivity." A black former congressman, Missouri Democrat William Clay, mocked Mr. Bush's professions of "reaching out" to blacks by comparing Mr. Ashcroft's appointment to the Ku Klux Klan's attempts to reach out "to blacks with nooses and burning crosses," while a small-time left-wing witch hunter in Missouri breathlessly declared that "an examination of Ashcroft's recent record shows that he has actively cultivated ties to white supremacists and extreme hate groups." The "white supremacists and extreme hate groups" turned out to be merely the *Southern Partisan*, a Confederate heritage periodical whose editor-in-chief last year ran the South Carolina presidential campaign of Sen. John McCain. (It's interesting that Honest John never once opened his trap to defend either his ally or his ally's magazine.) This "linkage" was soon turned into political fodder on which the media, the Congressional Black Caucus, and Senate Democrats were able to browse for several weeks.

Mr. Ashcroft was confirmed as attorney general, but only because he danced to the tunes called by his and the new President's enemies. The nominee hastened to repudiate any sympathies for the Confederacy, its leadership, or its political heritage that his interview with the *Partisan* might have suggested. "Slavery is abhorrent," Mr. Ashcroft gushed to his inquisitors. "Abraham Lincoln is my favorite president . . . I would have fought with Gen. Grant . . . I believe that racism is wrong."

Of course, at no time in his life had Mr. Ashcroft, who seems to be a dim but decent enough chap, ever uttered any thought or opinion that would insinuate he believed "racism" in any conventional or traditional meaning to be right. However vague the word has always been, its traditional usage generally had something to do with race and the claim by members of one race that another race was in some sense inferior—intellectually, morally, etc. By the conventional meaning, not only is Mr. Ashcroft not guilty, but his critics were not able to produce any evidence whatsoever to suggest that he was. At the most, they merely inferred his supposed beliefs about race from his stated views about the Confederacy and his various "links" with people and groups who also were never shown to be "racist."

A few weeks after the Ashcroft hearings, yet another controversy about "racism" erupted, this time on American college campuses. Neoconservative activist David Horowitz placed a series of ads in college newspapers arguing against the budding movement in support of reparations for slavery. Mr. Horowitz's ads, probably deliberately designed to be innocuous, offered ten reasons why reparations are "a bad idea *for blacks*—and racist" to boot. Some college newspapers actually dared to publish the ads and, not infrequently, soon found themselves under siege for their own "racism." At the University of Wisconsin's *Badger Herald*, a mob demanded the resignation of the editor, sporting signs with the slogan, "*Badger Herald* Racist."

Similar incidents are well known, both on college campuses and elsewhere, but the point is that what the targets are being accused of has nothing whatsoever to do with what they have said or thought or done about race as a biological or social phenomenon. "Racism" today has nothing to do with race; it has to do with politics. "Racism" is simply a set of beliefs or actions that oppose a certain political agenda, and that agenda is largely initiated by and closely associated with nonwhites and pushed by their white allies.

Thus, opposing reparations, as the mob indicated, is itself a "racist" act—not because the opponents of reparations think all blacks are naturally inferior and therefore should have been and should still be slaves, but simply because reparations are now part of the black racial-political agenda, and anyone who opposes that agenda is a racist. Opposing affirmative action is also racist—not because its opponents are said to hate blacks and other nonwhites and want to repress and exploit them, but for *any* reason. The same is largely true of supporting Confederate flags and symbols or opposing immigration or arguing in favor of "racial profiling" by police. Back in the 1980's, white South Africans would tell me that "apartheid" had been largely abolished in their country and that even radical critics, black or white, would have to recognize that truth. I always tried to make them see that "abolishing apartheid" had nothing to do with racial equality, that their critics had little interest in that, and that what they really wanted was black domination. "Apartheid" would cease to exist not when South African blacks were able to eat in desegregated restaurants and vote in parliamentary elections but only when they had taken over the government of the country—which is exact-

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ly what happened. "Apartheid" ended the day Nelson Mandela and his Communist Party-dominated African National Congress came to power, and not a moment before.

"Racism," concisely redefined, is merely opposition to nonwhite power or to any measure that promises such power or support for any measure or institution that thwarts such power. The rationale behind the new meaning of the word is the claim that in American, Western, or white societies, nonwhites are—by definition—subordinate groups, and the dominant society is therefore (also by definition) "white supremacist." It is not necessarily white supremacist because of the formal legal and political structure (as in South Africa under apartheid or the segregated South), any more than it is "racist" because of the particular ideological rationalization of the domination. "Racism" in this sense is no longer confined to those who adhere to hereditarian views of intelligence and behavior. That is one form of the new racism, but by no means the only one. In the ideological *Weltanschauung* from which the new meaning is derived, scientific theories and empirical studies that depict nonwhites as being in some respects inferior to whites are merely one means by which white dominance is rationalized, but religious, moral, social, historical, and other nonscientific rationales are also available and tend to be favored by the white ruling class over the rationale of biological "racism." The liberal-neoconservative ideal of a "color-blind society" is also racist, because it is used to reject measures like affirmative action that empower nonwhites. By the same reasoning, nonwhites themselves can also be "racists"—Clarence Thomas springs to mind—as the white ruling class conscripts and rewards nonwhites willing to offer justifications for their domination. Moreover, opposition to "hate crime" legislation, "sensitivity" training, immigration, any "civil rights" measure, law, or policy, or to anything else the nonwhite agenda demands is also racist, regardless of the reasons offered. You can argue against affirmative action because it's inherently unjust to everyone or support the Confederate flag because not many white Confederates owned slaves or be against reparations because they are bad for blacks or oppose immigration because it increases population growth or for whatever other reasons you can concoct, but it doesn't matter. You are still a "racist" and a supporter of "white supremacy" because what you want to do or stop doing thwarts nonwhite power.

The new meaning of "racism" is not a verbal trick or a political charade. It derives logically from the worldview that regards the dominant society as repressive and exploitative of nonwhites for the benefit of whites, and, granted its premises, it makes at least as much sense as the older and more conventional meaning of the word. Indeed, the new meaning becomes increasingly obvious as we see how the term is actually used and deployed against political figures like Mr. Ashcroft, President Bush, or Justice Thomas.

Still, the new meaning is not as obvious as it should be, for the simple reason that "conservatives"—I use the term in its broadest possible meaning, to include Mr. Bush and Mr. Ashcroft and Mr. Horowitz—still don't get it. They don't get it because their tactics in fighting the racially tinged measures they oppose seem always to presuppose the old definition of the word and therefore to aim at all costs at not being tarred with the "racist" label. Let's get a black nominee or spokesman; then they can't possibly accuse us of being racists. Let's not use hereditarian arguments but just talk about the "culture"; then they can't possibly accuse us of being racists. Let's not say reparations or affirmative action or immigration or sanctions on South Africa are bad for whites or for white Western societies and civilization, but say instead they're bad for blacks, for immigrants, for nonwhites; then they can't possibly accuse us of being racists.

The problem, of course, is that they do always accuse you of being racists, despite your pathological phobia of being so called and the bizarre lengths to which you are willing to go, distorting and weakening your own case, to avoid and deny the accusation. They accuse you of being racists precisely because, no matter what you say or how you say it, you are, by the new meaning of the term, exactly that. You may oppose the nonwhite political agenda for precisely the reasons you offer—because it really is, by your values, bad for blacks or immigrants or the environment or simply unjust—but the reasons don't matter, and no one on the other side of the racial power struggle gives a hoot about them. What they do give a hoot about is the triumph of their agenda and the power it will yield, and anyone who is not on board with that agenda, for whatever reasons they offer, is a "racist" and an apologist for "white supremacy."

Failure to recognize the new meaning of "racism" therefore constitutes a serious vulnerability on the part of those who oppose the nonwhite agenda, because by planning their strategy as though the conventional meaning of "racism" still applied, they do nothing to avoid the charge of "racism" in its new meaning and waste an immense amount of their time and energies trying to avoid being identified as "racists" in any sense. Their enemies can then avoid any serious debate about the issues on their agenda and spend all their time lobbing accusations and making the opponents of the agenda jump through hoops—which is exactly what Mr. Ashcroft did and what Mr. Bush has been doing ever since he was elected. But the new, political meaning of "racism" is so broad that it effectively strips the word of the old pejorative associations that serious political figures understandably wish to avoid. Under the new meaning, the term has no more pejorative connotation than "conservative" or "liberal"; indeed, it is more or less identical with the former term, and much of the purpose of the new meaning is precisely to demonize and delegitimize conservatism of any kind. Nevertheless, the word only retains any negative implications because of its linkages to the old meaning—which is why it survives at all in the national political lexicon—not because of the actual content of the new one.

Conservatives who seriously oppose the nonwhite political agenda (as serious conservatives will and should) can therefore expect to be called "racists," and while it is not useful to court the label, the new meaning it has acquired removes any compelling reason to avoid it, and certainly any reason to obsess over it. As the revolutionary and totalitarian character of the antiwhite racial-political agenda becomes more and more obvious, those who push that agenda will discover that the "racists" who oppose them are more and more numerous, until what they falsely call "racism"—so far from being "extremist" or a "fringe" movement—has evolved into the political and cultural mainstream, and conservatives of every stripe will say, "We are all 'racists' now." <c

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Letter From Rockford

by Scott P. Richert

Free at Last

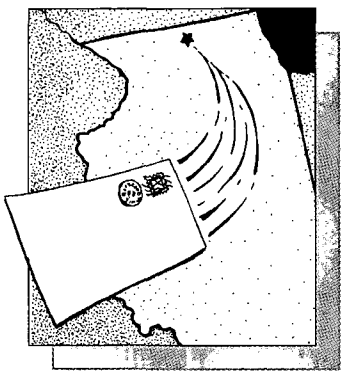
The Rockford school-desegregation lawsuit is finally over—or at least it will be, on Sunday, June 30, 2002. Yesterday—Wednesday, April 18—the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit overruled federal Magistrate P. Michael Mahoney and granted the school district "unitary status" (the legal term for being, in the court's words, "sufficiently desegregated to require the dissolution of the decree and the return of control of the public schools to the school board"). After 12 years of federal control and $300 million, the citizens of Rockford can finally see the light at the end of the tunnel.

No one on either side of the lawsuit was surprised by the ruling. Rockford's schools have been completely "desegregated" for several years now—"desegregation" defined not as equal access to education, but as quotas. As Judge Richard Posner, writing for the court, observed:

> Desegregation had been defined by the magistrate judge as the condition in which the minority composition of each school would not deviate by more than 15 percentage points from the minority composition of the population of the school district. . . . *the Rockford public schools are now less segregated than those in any previous case in which a school system was declared "unitary"* [emphasis added] . . .

The Seventh Circuit has never cared for Magistrate Mahoney's excessive zeal in pursuing "remedies," and the appeals court has repeatedly struck down what Posner refers to as "unrealistic goals for closing the white-minority gap in test scores." In his opinion, Posner took advantage of one last opportunity to weigh in on the question of equality of result:

> [I]t is obvious that other factors besides discrimination contribute to unequal educational attainment, such as poverty, parents' education and employment, family size, parental attitudes and behavior, prenatal, neonatal, and child health care, peer-group pressures,



and ethnic culture.

The mention of "ethnic culture" left one of the lawyers for the plaintiff class seeing red, and she all but accused Posner of being a racist. But multiculturalists can't have it both ways: If, when you control for all other factors, there is still a disparity of educational result, then the difference must be attributable either to genetics (which multiculturalists vehemently deny) or to culture.

Posner also criticized the assault on free speech by both the plaintiffs' lawyers and, implicitly, Magistrate Mahoney:

> It is not . . . that the school board must "actively" support the decree, must express "commitment" to it, and, above all, must not criticize it. The undemocratic implications of this position leave us almost speechless. Are . . . the members of the school board, elected long after and not complicit in the illegalities that gave rise to the litigation, forbidden, under threat of never resuming control of the public school system that they were elected to govern, to criticize a decree that in pursuit of an ambitious and possibly quixotic scheme of social engineering has imposed a formidable tax burden on the people who elected these officials?

In that last sentence, Posner displayed a greater understanding of the concerns of Rockford's citizens than did the school-board members who filed the request for unitary status. This lawsuit has touched on numerous constitutional and social issues: judicial taxation, neighborhood schools, busing, separation of powers, federalism. But for most Rockfordians, this case has always been primarily about taxes. That was made abundantly clear in the April 3 school-board elections, when board members Ted Biondo and Patti Delugas—elected on promises to fight judicial taxation, reduce spending, and provide tax relief—were resoundingly defeated by previous opponents Nancy Kalchbrenner and Jay Nellis, whom they had soundly defeated in 1997. By switching their votes on judicial taxation and endorsing three referenda in two years, Biondo and Delugas confused and demoralized their base. (The number of tax protesters plummeted from 16,000 in 1997, the year that they were elected, to fewer than 8,000 in 1999, the year they both voted for the tort fund.) Many of their previous supporters simply didn't bother to go to the polls this year, and others couldn't bring themselves to mark the ballot for candidates who had done the very same things that they had claimed their opponents would do.

Few of the real heroes of the last 12 years will ever receive the recognition they deserve: Mary Hitchcock, one of the founders of Rockford Educating All Children (R.E.A.CH.), the citizens' group that led the battle against the lawsuit; Barb Dent, who ran R.E.A.CH.'s annual tax protest; David Strommer, now in his third term as a board member, who never once wavered in his convictions that judicial taxation and judicial tyranny were wrong. And there are others, too numerous to mention, who faithfully attended board meetings, pounded the pavement for board candidates, and never gave up hope that their efforts would bring us to where we are today.

At the end of 12 years, our freedom is finally in sight, but it's impossible to forget all that we've lost. Our public schools will never recover; few of those who fled Rockford because of the lawsuit will ever return; the city has undergone a dramatic demographic shift over the last decade (more on that in November); and I just heard on the radio that the collective loss of property values in Rockford is estimated at over one billion dollars. Still, on this beautiful spring day, the sun seems to shine a little brighter, and the birds sound a little sweeter. Thank God Almighty, we are free at last.

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Letter From Venice

by Andrei Navrozov

Up With Prejudice

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I have been a Eurocentric, heterosexual, white male ever since I was a little baby. An unreconstructed Marxist would say that this accident of birth—carelessly amplified of late by the sybaritic sojourn in a palazzo on the Grand Canal whose windows watch the West decline over the campanile of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari—is what has determined my consciousness for the remainder of my natural life; and, of course, the son of a b- - - - would be right. The thing about Marxism I have always thought unnerving is its directness, so reminiscent of New York dinner parties and conversations with your in-laws. Show me your bank statements, says Che Guevara between puffs on a Cuban stout, and I shall tell you what sort of verses you scribble.

Those who know me may find it difficult to believe that, a couple of weeks ago, I decided to join a friend of mine traveling to Bombay. I had no special reason for going, except that I was curious. In fact, ever since I began learning English as a child in Moscow—by the thrilling, though laborious, process of tracing the etymology of each new word down to its Sanskrit root and finding the semantic node where one golden bough of our tree of languages divided from the other—I have had some peculiar fondness for ancient India, which neither Kipling nor Indian singing movies did anything to suborn. I could read for hours on end about the worship of the Yoginis as the 64 manifestations of the great goddess Devi, yet what mattered to me was not the validity of the underlying belief, nor any of the incomprehensible speculations about the feminine creative force and the occult powers of the Puranic *matri*, but the fact that the chess queen of Russian fairytales, Baba Yaga, was probably one of that brood.

We boarded the plane in England, where the nation's agriculture, already paralyzed by one cattle plague, was now in the grip of another: MASS CULL ON FARMS WIDENS AS MARKSMEN ARE CALLED IN was among the banners headlining the apocalypse. Writing about India, Kipling put it like this:

> Look westward—bears the blue no brown cloud-bank?
> Nay, it is written—wherefore should we fly?
> On our own field and by our cattle's flank
> Lie down, lie down to die!

Parliament had recently voted by a vast majority to outlaw fox hunting, and the day's other news was that a band of animal-rights protesters, wearing balaclavas and carrying "baseball bats and pickaxe handles," had attacked a 62-year-old angler on the banks of the river Granta with shouts of "How many fish did you kill today?" and "How would you like a hook through your mouth?" Meanwhile, the Glasgow branch of a national chain of music shops had put on sale promotional shirts emblazoned with the slogan "Jesus is a c- - -," whereupon the Lord Provost of that city, staking his all on the reality of a Europe that no longer exists outside the places where I live, directed the police to have them removed.

"We pride ourselves on offering the largest range of products available," objected the shop's manager as he ordered the shirts restocked, "and leaving it to the customers to choose whether they wish to purchase them." As for me, I rather pride myself on being unable to repeat the obscenity in question even in a private conversation. I am a Eurocentric, heterosexual, white male, and consequently, I have inhibitions that are infinitely more sacred than many a truth. It was in this state of mind—rubbed raw by the Sunday newspapers until it filled itself to the point of screaming with the debris of every ethical calamity I had witnessed while living in England—that I got off the plane and saw Bombay.

It too offered *the largest range of products available*, a promise which I ever suspected to mean, at best, a dirty towel and, at worst, a shallow grave. Despite the lateness of the hour and all our meek demurrers, the man behind the wheel of the hotel car who identified himself as "Driver Ghana, Car No. 1733" immediately conveyed us to a brothel. This brought to mind a television commercial of the Cold War epoch in which the same elephantine—and plausibly Eastern European—presence paraded on the catwalk over and over again wearing the same shabby clothes, until the grand finale was announced ("And finally . . . beachwear!") when she appeared wearing the shabby clothes yet again, but this time cradling a beach ball in her enormous arms. In short, perhaps because the props were even thinner on the ground than the taboos, it was clear to me at once that love in Bombay was impossible.

What of life? The following morning, the sun rose, laboriously, over the city and hung there, in the white sulfur mist, like the yolk of a rotten egg. It illuminated a hepatotoxic sea the color of overripe bananas, and a seafront promenade filled with the cries of hundreds of young, healthy men selling recreational drugs and children's balloons: "*Balam, balam, balam, balam*! Hello? *Balam, balam, balam, balam*! Hello?" Nobody bought either, which only increased the sensation of having been awakened to a psychedelic rendition of some unknown canto of Dante's *Inferno*, the one about the Circle of Inflated Balloon Sellers, the adults condemned to hawk children's toys in a city where the children are busy panhandling.

Ah, those infamous children of India! Crippled, mutilated, filthy, with handsome, often refined, always serious faces, the children of India are busy begging alms from the tourists who come there, as a week's close observation of my hotel companions made me realize, for no other purpose than *to feel white*, obviously a long forbidden pleasure in their countries of origin. The tourist industry's marketing of Asia and Africa is undoubtedly the most ruthless colonial exercise in the history of mankind, compared to which the pith helmets of the Raj and the bayonets of the Boers are so much incongruous balloon selling. If you want to find racism on a global scale, visit your local travel agent. He will tell you that, if you really want to have fun, you should go where dark people live on two cents a day.

Now, I have seen something of poverty. I was born in an apartment where 35 people, from nine families, lived under

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one leaky roof, sharing a bath and a telephone. But Bombay does not suffer from poverty; it suffers from bestiality. If you are a Russian living under Brezhnev on two rubles a day, as often as not you will find a bucket of paint to make your corner of a hopeless universe slightly more habitable; if you are an Italian living in the postwar slums of Naples on your mother's cooking, as often as not you will procure two meters of polka-dot georgette to make a blouse for Sophia Loren; but if you are an Indian living in Bombay under the shadow of a Coca Cola hoarding, you will do nothing but gaze, attentively yet dispassionately, upon a dusty road mined with rabid dogs, listening to the honking of horns in tin cars and munching on a chance scrap of venomous offal.

I fear that modern India is not only the immemorial past of Europe, but its impending future. There was a time when we, too, worshiped the Yoginis, and hurricanes, and flowers, in the distant millennia before our civilization became centered on man, on God, and on its own destiny, yet judging by the Sunday newspapers, that time is fast upon us once more. For to defend a fish in the Granta from a barbed hook, and to save a fox in Hampshire from being hunted with hounds, is not only not merciful, kind, or Christian, it is an act of pagan sacrilege on a par with the blasphemy of the greedy shopkeeper of Glasgow. To elevate beast to the place of man is to denigrate man to the level of beast.

The rivers in England, incidentally, are already the color of overripe bananas. Unless the taboos of our civilization are held sacred—and those who offer us *the largest range of products available* are strung up on lampposts as a matter of course—the day will surely come when the descendants of those same members of Parliament who now cast votes for human rights and animal progress will sit half-naked in Trafalgar Square, amid dysenteric refuse and choleraic waste, with the mongrel descendants of their neighbors' ancestral hounds for company. I cannot say that I am unrelievedly tearful at the prospect.

Andrei Navrozov is Chronicles' *European correspondent.*

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Letter From Wisconsin

by David B. Schock

Dancing at LaRue

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The stars of the dance floor, a bantam couple, whirl to the "EE-II-EE-II-OO Polka," a tune that would be obscure to almost anybody but the Mellotones. Their feet, tiny to start with, push each between the other's with the precision of a sewing-machine needle working a button foot. Around and around they twirl, not with the elephantine steps of others on the floor, but with an effortless grace refined through long practice.

They might be 60, but barely. His tight jeans reveal legs no bigger than the driveshaft from a '67 Buick Electra (less than four inches in diameter). His scruffy beard is mostly white, but the red cap pulled tight over his forehead reveals neither baldness nor a full head of hair. He does have a little potbelly pushing up over his belt, but his is hardly the only one in this crowd: All the good male dancers over 30 have a little bulge. It doesn't slow them much.

His dance partner is swathed in dark leggings, maybe olive, maybe charcoal—it's impossible to tell in the uncertain light spilling off the bandstand and over the dance floor. She sports a ruffled blouse and a hairstyle that was long out of fashion before it was pinned up. Her face is commonplace and unremarkable, at least to us. She is happy, content to be dancing. His face is a mask, looking like the early stages of Parkinson's, but more likely trained not to reveal the joy that his feet cannot conceal. Men in LaRue don't show by their expressions just how much they love to dance—well, not men who are middle-aged or above; the younger ones smile wildly.

I can tell that something comes alive in them when they're dancing. My two friends and I have come to watch—taking a break from our work—and to share in the good time of a Saturday-night dance. I look around at all the dancers on the floor and the other watchers sitting at long tables. We've slipped under the radar; we're outsiders, but we haven't attracted too much attention. We could change all that by bringing in the big video camera that's in the van and setting up some lights. If Jay were to don his Sony earphones while aiming the microphone pole at somebody, it wouldn't take more than five seconds for the party to go away.

We like things here just the way they are; we wouldn't change anything. I wouldn't even want the men to smile, because then they would become the Lawrence Welk Dancers.

With "Shave and a Haircut, Two Bits," the Mellotones conclude "EE-II-EE-II-OO," then launch into "Apple, Peaches, Pumpkin Pie"—another polka—to round out the set. "Apple, peaches, pumpkin pie / who's not ready holler I / let's go play hide and seek." They change the lyrics for the next stanza: "I've looked here, I've looked there / I've looked in her underwear / let's go play hide and seek."

This polka drives the less able from the dance floor, but the bantams still hold honors, even against a stylish couple who are younger, much better dressed, and have moves that flow over with excess energy. The man is determined to kick down his heels as hard as he can. The thunder against the oak floor reverberates through the dance hall. It's a testosterone challenge.

The dance hall itself—a large, open room added to a crowded bar—is filled with beery, cheery voices; the dance is an event on the social calendar of this tiny hamlet. The walls are festooned with big, paper Valentine's Day hearts. Twisted crepe streamers—red and white—radiate from the slowly twisting mirror ball that hangs above the center of the room. There's no light aimed at it to throw diamonds on the floor and the four walls, but it turns nevertheless. The dance hall has been resurrected from disuse; the plain walls have been painted off-white, but the curtains that cover the high windows are dotted swiss. The suspended ceiling gives way over the bandstand to egg-carton separators stapled into place: a homegrown acoustical remedy for overloud bands. It might work, but I doubt if it would pass fire code.

LaRue consists of three remaining buildings in a sea of farmland, barren, dotted during this long winter with brown stubble and patches of snow. The dance at the LaRue Bar brings out local farmers and residents of the next small town, North Freedom, some four miles distant. LaRue, Wisconsin, is no longer even a spot on the map; there is no post office. Its

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only distinction is the bar and the fact that it is almost the terminus of the Mid Continent Railway, a line used and maintained by a steam-railway museum in North Freedom. The train will stop in LaRue if someone flags it down, but normally it runs into the deserted limestone quarry, nearly a mile further down the line. There, the little engine, either a coal-fired or—this winter—an oil-fired locomotive, splits apart from the cars it is hauling, scoots past on a parallel siding, and recouples on the rear of the train and backs down the line all the way to the switchyard at North Freedom. Watching over it all is the station, a silent sentinel. That building—so necessary for a rail operation—was moved from someplace else; it's a prime example of the best the 19th century had to offer. I've seen at least a hundred others just like it.

We three—refugees from a long weekend of videotaping for a network show—had left the train as it finished one round-trip and prepared to make another. It was the dinner train—prime rib and all the fixin's—and it took two trips to afford enough time to deliver the meal. The waiters, the barman, the cooks, and the conductor are all volunteers. They donate their time and service so the little railway line can raise enough operating capital to keep going. During the summer, the train runs every weekend. During the winter, however, this is it: the Winter Train, one weekend only, three days of regular service and two evenings of the dinner train—all on five miles of track.

In their tuxedos, the waiters make an elegant foil to the immaculately white-shirted cooks. They smile with the proper reserve, correctly serving from the right, clearing from the left. Even aboard the rocking train, they don't spill much of the vintage wine—a drop here, a drop there, and then mostly on the white tablecloths. The passenger-diners are included in the drama. They know the fare goes for a good cause, and they will put up with some inconvenience—cars suddenly too hot, no working bathrooms. They know the volunteers are working hard to make the dinner fun for everyone. Even the black-suited conductor, who is responsible for passenger safety, smiles as he checks his train watch: The schedule is a matter of grave concern.

I've seen all these volunteers earlier and in other guises: the machinist, who yesterday was milling down a piece of steel for a wheel lock; the wood refinisher, who was stripping old lead paint that had been applied over cherry veneer. They are reincarnated in roles of service to the railroad. Even the engineers and brakemen take turns with other jobs.

Some people call these volunteers "foamers"; supposedly, they foam at the mouth when they see trains. In North Freedom, they are free to foam with impunity: They, after all, started the museum. They give up as many as 52 weekends a year to work on outmoded, outdated steam locomotives. Their enthusiasm leads them to buy ancient cabooses and line them up on a siding laid just for such time as their foaming interest allows. The volunteers come here to live while practicing their lost arts of machining, stripping, painting, roofing, refinishing, upholstering, and whatever else it takes to make a train—derelict or barely running—steam like new, or maybe better than new.

Some people like a cabin in the woods or a cottage by the lake. These folks like a caboose by the Baraboo River, smack dab in the middle of North Freedom's train yard. There are perhaps 20 abandoned steam engines shunted off on sidings for rebuilding, countless trucks from underneath railway cars stacked like a giant's toys, piles of rails and ties awaiting placement. To an untrained eye such as mine, it looks like a scrap yard. To a foamer, it's a foretaste of heaven.

A steam whistle is both the morning alarm and the nightly curfew. Most of the volunteers are so tired after a day's labor that they will fall into easy slumbers. But those few who keep up the steam in the locomotive boilers must stay awake; they are the hostlers. (An ostler—with or without the "h"—was the man who would take charge of travelers' horses at an inn: from horses to the iron horse.)

You don't just switch off a great steam engine; you don't just switch it on, either. The 2,000-horsepower boilers need to be coddled, fed, watered, maintained. Giving them fire, giving them life, is a dicey proposition. They are—at the best of times—barely controlled bombs, boiling water running through tubes in a fiery furnace. One crack in a pipe, one breach in the fire shield, and anyone within a couple hundred yards might take on shrapnel.

During the day, the engines churn down the track, threatening at every moment to derail, to come charging at anybody who dares to look too hard. But at night, they become living things, with their chuff and suss sounding off into the darkness. They are like dragons, resting and dreaming, and somebody has to stay up all night to make sure that they survive. If the fire goes out, the train could freeze, especially in zero-degree weather—like tonight.

We're four miles from the train, parked at North Freedom, inside the LaRue Bar with the Mellotones, sipping a few beers and waiting until the dinner train is vacant—except for the hostler. When she's the only one left, we head back for one last interview. What's it like, we want to know, to sit out at night, under the stars, with only the great engine for company? And: Why? We know the answer: It's a fine madness, practiced by only a few, all the more desired because of its gnosticism.

The madness has spilled over. Take the bar, for instance. The new owners came up for a train weekend, fell in love with the desolation, and fled Chicago for the remote fastness of LaRue. They cater to the train crowd and serve the locals, who have—by all indications—taken them to their collective bosom. The owners have restored the ancient edifice, with its front bar and ornate back bar. This, too, is an historical site. It was closed, derelict, until the Chicagoans took it over. And they took over with vim: They scrubbed and cleaned, sanded and revarnished, and reopened the bar and dance hall.

I see one of the proprietors—the husband—his head dancing merrily to the beat of the band. And what a head—huge, with black curly hair and a full beard covering everything except his eyes, his upper cheeks, and the tips of his ears. He has no neck (that I can discern), and the fat where his neck should be rolls over his mountainous shoulders when he turns his head from side to side to survey his happy patrons. I think he is smiling. Now, thanks to his work, there is once again a place to get a drink at LaRue. And what drink: German, Irish, all the Netherlands beers, and Wisconsin brew, too! My favorite: Oof Da, a local bock beer with a kick like a mule. We're sipping.

The Mellotones are way ahead of us. Not that we're trying to keep up: We still have work to do, and a fuzzy eye or a fuzzy question would dull the final product. But the Mellotones have work to do, too—another couple of sets—and they're pounding shots two at a time. I know a lot of musicians who claim they play better when they're drunk. They just think they do—at least, most of them.

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But the Mellotones are impervious, and the dancers are not critical of their stage habits. Nor is the crowd concerned when they modify a rendition of "In the Mood." The Cordovox player has slipped over to pick up a tenor sax. He's playing about a quarter-tone sharp, and it sets my back teeth dancing in sync with those on the floor. The valve-trombone man has slipped behind the Cordovox and reveals an aptitude for this instrument as well. The drummer, inured to the switch-hitting, plays steadily. He looks bored, and each stroke on the ride cymbal is the same—every time, every song. The dancers don't mind; live music is a treat anytime.

With "Sentimental Journey," a young woman—large, obese—takes to the floor with her husband. If she were in the ubiquitous tights or blue jeans, she would be grotesque. She's not. In a dress that rides above her knees, she displays calves as big as hams and the promise of gargantuan thighs. But she looks appealing. Both tall and thick, she is graceful and artistically poised on spiked heels. A few quick calculations: Say she weighs 300 pounds and that each heel is one-quarter square inch. If she lands on one heel with all her weight, that would equal 1,200 pounds per square inch. That's just weight; it doesn't even take into account the force that goes with it. Foot-pounds of energy, they call it. The floor shakes just a little; certainly it's not soft or wavy.

She may know physics. She's smiling with a secretive smile; she certainly knows something we can't guess, but can only envy. I am happy for her, perhaps a bit jealous of her bliss as she is swept away in the arms of her lover.

I buy the second round, and we sit and watch. We watch hard, because we know we are really seeing something.

A young man enters the room, his face red from the cold. He sheds his coat and finds his young lady. Her jeans fit well. Together, they dance through the crowd. I can't recall when I've seen better young dancers. They are smiling, assured. I know their dancing will protect them from harm, as it has protected all the others who are on the floor. They're too young to be married, but not too young to think about it. In a few years, they may be teaching their babies a polka or a shottish or a jitterbug. They're not swing dancing in the style of this latter-day revival; they're dancing the way their parents do, which is the way *their* parents did.

We learn lessons in humility this way. I can't dance, and neither can the other two. Nor would we ask anyone to dance with us here; our wives are at home, some 500 miles away. We are not flirts or rounders. But we watch, and somehow we fit in (or think we do). Nobody asks where we're from. This crowd is used to steam-train volunteers, and they probably assume we're of that ilk. Maybe we smell of trains, and that protects us. We don't see any others from the railroad, but we know they sometimes come here.

The second beer is gone. We must be, too: The hostler awaits. The band breaks as we leave. We wave to the massive owner, and he waves back as we exit through the front door.

We pull up beside the steaming locomotive, and I hotfoot it around the far side of a nearby building to make some steam of my own.

I return to find the other two ready to begin the interview. Dennis has mounted a little light on the camera; he's going to rely on some of the reflected glow from the open boiler. Jay adjusts his earphones and positions the mike. I climb up the side ladder to the engine, and we begin this last interview, finally back in our own element. The hostler tells us the secret thoughts of this particular locomotive. We listen to her and to the engine, and the night moves toward day.

In the hiss of the engine and the silent

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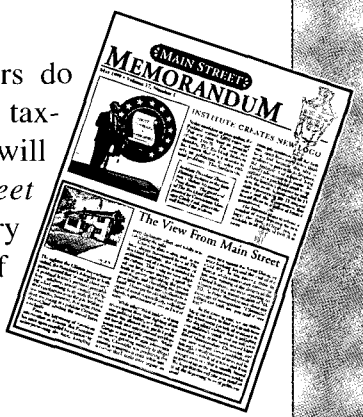

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pass of stars, we strike the equipment and return to our hotel for a few hours' sleep.

We're up in time for a 9:00 A.M. breakfast. All the tapes from the shoot are nestled safely in the van, and we're on our way home. A five-day road trip, a project depicting this fine obsession, produced by a compulsion of our own.

My great-grandfather was a railroad man, the first person ever to collect a pension from the Pere Marquette Railroad. There were others in my family, too: great uncles, oddly assorted cousins.

Dennis, the videographer and real producer of this project, has a more recent history with trains. He even helped operate the very locomotive we've taped this trip: the little oil-fired Saginaw Lumber Co. Engine No. 2. After its lumber years, No. 2 ran the rails north of Cadillac as a hobby train. Dennis and his father were volunteers on the crew up there. Before our trip, Dennis described (in horrible detail) the tendency of the little engine to blow fire out of the fire box and into the cab when the oil regulation was less than perfect. We saw it happen around our ankles but escaped unsinged. Dennis's grandfather was a section boss up north, keeping up his mile of track. That was his life's work.

Dennis goes so far in his foaming that his office—really his editing studio—is a 1927 Grand Trunk Western caboose. It is a cramped—but fun—place to work. That's where we're heading now, back to Michigan: Dennis to his house on the hill below the studio; Jay, to his country house; I, to my home along the Grand River.

We're tired but happy as we make desultory chat about the trip. We always come back to the bar and the dancers, and I vow—silently—that I'm going to take lessons with my wife, lessons that will let us move in time, gracefully, to the beat of a band like the Mellotones.

I want to dance at LaRue.

David B. Schock writes from Grand Haven, Michigan.

Letter From Arizona

by Wilma Gustinich

Voice in the Desert

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"And when they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in paradise at the afternoon air, Adam and his wife hid themselves from the face of the LORD God, amidst the trees of paradise."

I had always imagined God walking like a whisper in the Garden of Eden, the power of His existence clearing a path before Him. In Tucson, in the summer, He does not walk quietly.

At first, one might miss the beginning of His approach. The only warning is a meager flash of light in the distance. There is no sound, only a sharp line to etch the horizon. The air is heavy with heat, and at sundown the darkness glides slowly, soundlessly between the drooping mesquite trees and transfixed saguaros. The birds and lizards have disappeared. The tarantula has covered her hole. The insects are nowhere in sight. Expectancy rides upon the passing minutes.

Suddenly, a larger flash lights up the underbelly of distant black clouds, a prelude to a soft rumble like the footsteps of an approaching giant. Soon the flashes become arrhythmic staccatos of light from one end of the horizon to the other, and the low rumble becomes louder, a constant throb like the sound of a marching army. The plants wait. He is coming. He is walking slowly in His desert Eden. He parts the air before Him, and they tremble. The flashes become more brilliant and dart across the horizon like a mysterious code filling the sky. They impress themselves upon the eye and linger, revealing the silhouettes of trees and tall cacti swaying with each flash. Suddenly the rustling leaves undulate violently, uncontrollably. Branches flagellate each other, and a blinding light seems to cue a wind that threatens to uproot trees and houses. I grip the patio railing to keep myself erect. I look up just as a violent crack sends terrifying reverberations through the earth and up through my feet and legs, and I imagine the earth opening beneath me.

Overhead, a terrifying, brittle detonation accompanies a blinding light as though the sky has broken open and He is about to speak. In an instant, the heat of Hell is transformed, and a skin-splitting bombardment of ice pummels the earth and threatens to destroy the windows of my meager shelter. I receive the message: Pride rightly belongs only to the One Who programs nature's laws. The city is insignificant; its shelters as nothing. The bare desert matters with its indomitable rules of life and death.

He is overhead now, and I feel as though I am somewhere deep within His chest as He roars in some eternal language. Over and over He repeats the cracks and rumbles of a power I sense may never be understood by man.

Rain falls softly at first, in little drops that tap lightly against the window pane. Almost imperceptibly, others drop, one by one, to be devoured in an instant by parched rocks. But soon an explosion overhead unleashes a deluge; in an instant, rivulets become streams, which become mad, rushing torrents that transport rocks and dust and desert detritus for unknown distances to become lost in the folds of other migrating refuse, all following a mysterious trajectory to an unknown end.

But I remain here, watching the swirling water purify the earth, listening as the lightning fades and the thunder drifts away. After a time, His voice becomes a fading whisper, and the desert becomes silent as a memory. I am left alone, a thirsty pilgrim awaiting His return.

Wilma Gustinich writes from Tucson.

LIBERAL ARTS

BEAT DOWN BY THE MAN

"Accused of robbing a bank in Hempfield, Pa., Blaine Gamble, 60, claimed 'cultural insanity' as a defense, explaining that 44 years of oppression by whites had driven him insane and 'ruptured his psychic core.' During jury selection, U.S. District Judge William L. Standish informed Gamble that if he intended using an insanity defense he would have to admit he robbed the bank. Gamble balked and denied having robbed the bank. A jury convicted him, and he was sentenced to 13 years in prison.

—*from the* Bloomington Independent *(August 17, 2000).*

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by Srdja Trifkovic

Robert Hanssen and the New Meaning of Treason

A year ago, Robert Philip Hanssen apparently felt the need to explain to the Russians his motives for supplying them with thousands of top-secret U.S. intelligence documents over the preceding decade and a half. The veteran FBI agent wrote them a letter, confessing that he is neither insanely brave, nor merely insane, but "insanely loyal" to his adolescent ideal of becoming "a new Kim Philby."

A degenerate, Stalin-worshipping British traitor, boozing his fugitive days away in a Moscow apartment block, seems an odd choice of a role model for an American teenager. But to spend the next 40-plus years acting out the fantasy, undetected and unsuspected—and then to confess it all to his invisible foreign contacts—is ridiculous. It sounds like a joke an overconfident Mr. Hanssen wanted to play on his paymasters. Hanssen appears to have been primarily loyal to his wallet—to the tune of $1.5 million in used, small notes and precious stones, spread over 15 years.

In return, this counterintelligence specialist—whose job was to keep an eye on the KGB in America—provided top-quality goods. Just for starters, he identified three Russians working from the Soviet embassy in Washington, D.C., who had been recruited as double agents by the United States.

News reports invariably referred to Hanssen as a "spy." They are wrong: He is a traitor. A spy is an American stealing Russian secrets or a Russian stealing American ones. Rudolph Abel and Gary Powers were spies; the Rosenbergs, Alger Hiss, Aldrich Ames, and Hanssen were not.

The fact that the networks and big dailies avoided the word "treason" is not surprising: It is a word inseparable from notions of honor, patriotism, loyalty, and other reactionary leftovers from pre-postmodern times. Even FBI director Louis Freeh made the curious remark that Hanssen's conduct "represents the most traitorous actions imaginable against a country governed by the rule of law." Did he mean that, in a country governed by the rule of a dictator, such actions would not have been so "traitorous"?

Espionage, the second-oldest profession, shares some basics with the oldest: deception and duplicity. Both call for similar talents, and top spies, like top prostitutes, may enjoy the aura of glamour tinged with danger. In certain temperamental types, both callings evoke a somewhat perverse excitement. Both spies and whores can be perfectly useful members of their societies—somewhat disrespectable, perhaps, but necessary nevertheless.

Treason, on the other hand, is more akin to adultery. Both involve betrayal and abuse of trust; unlike some adulterers, however, traitors are beyond redemption. Some apologists for Jonathan Pollard suggest that "treason" applies only to helping an enemy in time of war, not to "illegally helping an ally in peacetime." This is the same as saying that an occasional tryst with one's sister-in-law does not really count as "adultery." A country that grants you the rights and privileges of citizenship also has an exclusive claim to your allegiance. This claim is doubled in the case of a Klaus Fuchs, who asked for and was given refuge from persecution by another government.

All traitors are bad, but not all are equal. As Rebecca West noted in *The New Meaning of Treason* (1964), the assorted would-be Quislings of World War II were at least open enemies of liberal democracy. Léon Degrelle, Anton Mussert, or Leo Amery were loath to burrow quietly into strategic spots so as to undermine their host society while professing allegiance to it. William Joyce, the Reich's English radio voice, thought that Britain was right—albeit mistaken—to hang him. An RAF officer who had helped "Lord Haw-Haw" with his scripts (and got ten years for his efforts) burst out indignantly: "This just shows how rotten this democratic country is! The Germans would have had the honesty to shoot me!"

Communist traitors, by contrast, were sustained by their "ideology" of self-hatred masquerading as dialectical materialism. In England, they enjoyed a field day from the late 1930's on, leaving a putrid trail that spanned five decades. Their elevated milieu, *savoir-faire*, and privileged status (Anthony Blunt), coupled with their access to strategic information and personnel (Philby), made them truly lethal to the prospects for Britain's moral recovery. Money was neither here nor there. The inherently corrupt nature of the game itself served as a self-justifying microcosm of the society at large: manipulative, materialistic, depressingly sterile. The reward of betrayal was in the act itself, in the quiet superiority of grasping the uselessness and absurdity of it all, while persevering in the act until the end.

Aldrich Ames's stated explanation ("it was all a game anyway") ostensibly corresponded to this model, but with him and Hanssen, we see a new type altogether. The contemporary American traitor does not even pretend that he cares about ideas. "Exploitable weaknesses" that used to set off alarms with seasoned CIA and FBI campus recruiters are pervasive. Today, they would have to include the very fact of coming of age under Bill Clinton or attending public schools.

As the American nation is reduced by its rulers to an ever more diverse "proposition," there is precious little anchorage for loyalty and honor—let alone readiness to make a supreme sacrifice. "I couldn't do that" increasingly begs the question, "Why not?" Why not sell neutron-bomb blueprints to Osama bin Laden if Clinton didn't mind the Chinese getting them? Why not transact a little business with the bad guys if it is OK for Marc Rich to do so?

That which is not worth dying for is not worth not betraying. Opportunity to act now equals temptation, and nothing is wrong *per se*. Robert Hanssen is no Kim Philby; he's just a modern American. <C>

MOVING?

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POLITICS

Billy in the Lowground

by Janet Scott Barlow

"You may look bad, Bill, but we look just plain stupid." That was the wounded and furious summation of *Washington Post* columnist Richard Cohen upon Bill Clinton's inglorious exit from the presidency. Many questions are raised by that single sentence from a lone writer, the first being: Who is the "we" Cohen referred to? His answer: *We* is "me and everyone else who has ever defended [Clinton]."

Ah, already we're getting somewhere, although it's not where Richard Cohen would take us. For the fact is that Clinton defenders have never been only Clinton defenders. They are part of a larger collective and are identifiable as such. They are the liberal establishment, the media and political elite. And since the self-assumed intellectual superiority of every liberal elite precludes, above all else, stupidity, and—at the same time—the life's purpose of all liberal elites is to point out the stupidity of others, it follows that the mother of all nightmares for any elite liberal is to find himself in Richard Cohen's position, i.e., looking stupid. For eight years, liberals responded to the truism "We are known by the company we keep" by redefining Bill Clinton, at every turn, as worthy of association. They are now surprised to discover that Clinton's behavior ended up defining them. What dopes.

But they are dopes in misery, nonetheless. And if it's Bill Clinton who is responsible for their suffering, you can bet the Spode china it's Bill Clinton who will pay. It is one thing to have adulterous sex in the Oval Office, to lie under oath, to suborn perjury, and to obstruct justice. It's another thing altogether to make the Richard Cohens of the world look stupid. The first series of actions is debatable and therefore defensible, while the second part, the stupid stuff . . . well, you try that one, mister, and you're dead meat. There are *standards* at stake here, after all: You may be dishonest but not tacky; immorality is relative, but bad taste is not. Values come and go, but style is eternal.

Like no other figure in living memory, Bill Clinton brought into high relief the two opposing worldviews into which Americans are often divided. The first group is made up of people who believe that behavior is identity (a man who tells lies is a liar) and character is destiny (indecent people generate indecency). The second group believes that identity determines behavior (smart people don't do stupid things) and destiny is a validation of character (a baby-boomer Democrat who rises to the presidency is, *ipso facto*, a person of positive substance). Within this second group there exists a subset, a collection of graying and bifocaled boomer hipsters who approach politics armed only with the standards of popular culture and the yardstick of celebrity. It is their self-appointed task to judge a given politician's hip quotient—which, in the case of Bill Clinton, they immediately determined, in joyful delirium, to be quite as high as their own.

This hipster subset has been easily as affected by Bill Clinton's ups and downs as have the two main groups. For them, Clinton was a gift straight from boomer heaven, what with his affinity for movies (not to mention movie stars), all the Elvis business, and, of course, that dumb saxophone. Through Clinton, the hipsters were able both to cling to their youth and to ease vicariously into a really cool middle age.

But despite all that clinging and easing, the hipsters are now suffering nearly as much as Richard Cohen. After projecting the image of their most desirable selves, both personally and generationally, onto Bill Clinton—after, that is, fishing for years in highly polluted waters—they are now shocked to discover that they have reeled in nothing but tin cans and old shoes. To them, it doesn't much matter what Bill did. The important thing is that his image, and therefore their image, suffered in the process. On the day he left office, Clinton granted a presidential pardon to an unrepentant, tax-cheating, fugitive crook, and he hogged the limelight with a series of graceless speeches. Question: Which action was worse? Don't laugh. If you once believed that Bill Clinton was destined for presidential greatness because he shared your political origins (the 60's) as well as your pop-culture fixations, it can be really tough (especially while surrounded by tin cans and old shoes) to weigh genuine corruption against absolute tackiness.

Mere weeks into the post-Clinton era, the resounding question from all elite quarters was "Will it ever end?" And with the dawn of each new day came the answer: Don't hold your breath. Imagine, for instance, the shudder that went through the liberal establishment upon learning that the first media figure through which Bill Clinton chose to defend his last-minute presidential actions was that low-rent journalist and full-time sensationalist, Geraldo Rivera. Rivera's scoop: Clinton was "bewildered," "stressed out," and, yes, "hurt." Think of it: Just Bill and Geraldo, a couple of misunderstood guys feeling each other's pain via cell phone. The unambiguous shabbiness of it was enough to give the entire liberal power structure a case of the vapors. (What? He's calling Geraldo? Oh, God, you're kidding, right?) In reality, of course, the only surprising thing about the Clinton/Rivera chat is the fact that America possesses technology sufficient to handle the simultaneous transmission of the world's two most overheated egos (that is, the phones didn't melt).

Bill and Hillary Clinton (and how can we discuss one without discussing the other?) are in a new and possibly deadly kind of trouble: Each is now afflicted with what was once the other's problem. Bill's problem is that he no longer holds elective office. Hillary's problem is that she now does.

Bill Clinton sought the presidency because it is the world's biggest stage. What is obvious now is that he regarded the stage as portable—something he could pack up and take with him, unfolding it for use as the spirit moved him for the rest of his natural life. That is such an exquisitely gauche assumption, such a traumatically embarrassing spectacle, that it has brought liberals, hipster subset and all, to a point of crisis. Without the mantle and the trappings of the presidency, Bill Clinton is just a deluded narcissist, preening for love and grubbing for money upon his imaginary stage. What the elites once saw as fascinating—the complex psychology

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and varied (facile) talents of our first baby-boomer president—are now, when observed in an ex-president (*ex*: Has there ever been a more powerful prefix?), not a source of fascination but a source of chagrin. The people who believed that Bill Clinton made the presidency interesting are finally confronting their 180-degree mistake: To the extent Bill Clinton was interesting, it was the presidency that made him so.

As for Hillary Clinton, her problem, in an immediate sense, is bigger than her husband's, and more ironic. After nearly eight years of hearing "Who elected her?" every time she tried some inappropriate power grab, Mrs. Clinton came up with an answer: She would legitimize herself and her political views by running for office. By all appearances, she was a hardworking candidate, and she was rewarded with a decisive victory.

So Mrs. Clinton's legitimization as a politician has liberated her, right? Well, no, as it turns out, not really. For the first time in her very political life, Hillary Clinton now has a fixed, defined identity. She is an elected official, a *professional* politician, an identity that carries many more constraints than freedoms. No longer can Mrs. Clinton slide with her customary expediency into the role of First Lady, or Bill's Wife, or Just A Mom, or Brilliant Lawyer, or Generally Superior Human Being. She can no longer evade accountability by choosing at will among the many titles at her disposal. She has only one title now: United States senator. And as such, she appears, at least in these early months, miserable: confined, stifled, angry. (And what else is new?)

Hillary is not alone in her unhappiness. While Bill Clinton's supporters placed themselves, through Clinton, upon a boomer pedestal, Hillary's loyalists, always more cult-like and worshipful, elevated Mrs. Clinton herself to iconic status. Thus, the revelation that she joined (perhaps even led) her husband in their vulgar exit from their White House left her followers to wrestle with their own questions. Does an icon go trolling for soup plates? Does a saint pocket the silverware? Does a goddess walk off with the rugs?

While these issues can get complicated, one thing remains simple—and it forms the crux of the problem for both Mrs. Clinton and the Church of Hillary: A U.S. senator had better not pocket or walk off with anything. One wonders if, when she decided to run for office, Hillary Clinton realized that victory would subject her to the same standards of behavior as, say, Jesse Helms. One wonders further whether her most fervent supporters realized that victory would end her reign as free-floating high priestess, reducing her to the size of, well, Jesse Helms.

Pain, pain, everywhere you turn. How to ease all this suffering? Let us start by revisiting Richard Cohen's brief sentence: "You may look bad, Bill, but we look just plain stupid." If the rule in political corruption is to follow the money, the rule in intellectual and moral corruption is to follow the language. The nugget of discovery in Cohen's sentence rests in his choice of verb: Bill *looks* bad; we *look* stupid. The meaning of "look" in this context: to give the appearance of. What Richard Cohen is saying, then, is that after all that has gone before, Bill Clinton merely gives the appearance of badness. And Cohen? After misjudging the meaning of all that has gone before, he merely gives the appearance of stupidity.

Richard Cohen's choice of equivocal language reveals his equivocal conclusion about both Bill Clinton and himself, and reveals, too, why he (and others like him) can't find peace: He cannot admit the raw truth. Bill Clinton doesn't look bad; he *is* bad. Likewise, when it comes to Clinton, Richard Cohen doesn't look stupid; he *is* stupid. That's the fact, Jack; that's the truth. And it shall set you free.

Janet Scott Barlow, who writes from Cincinnati, Ohio, is the author of The Nonpatriotic President: A Survey of the Clinton Years *(Chronicles Press).*

RELIGION

The New Anti-Civilization

by Anthony Harrigan

Vaclav Havel has said that we are undergoing "the brutal destruction of a cultural landscape that has taken centuries to develop"; within this decaying global civilization "is in essence the first atheistic civilization in the history of mankind." This use of the word "civilization" is a contradiction in terms, since the new moral and intellectual world order is the very opposite of what civilization has always meant.

Havel's basic case is that atheism is making the long march through Western institutions, thereby profoundly changing the tone and behavior of global society. But that does not mean that Christianity is dead—or waning—as a vital force in human life. There are as many as two billion Christians worldwide. Spiritual leaders such as Pope John Paul II continue to receive the admiration and respect of believers. And there have been wondrous events that have brought joy to the hearts of the faithful, events that could not have been anticipated even 15 years ago—notably, the death of atheistic Soviet communism and the return of millions of Russians to the faith.

The people of Eastern Europe provide the most inspiring example for all believers across the globe, for they kept Christianity alive in their hearts despite 75 years of persecution under militant, atheistic communism. But in many other parts of the world—notably America and Europe—the powers of darkness have gained an unprecedented advantage over Christendom, forcing changes in intellectual life and social conditions that strike at the heart of the Christian message. The powers of unbelief have come to dominate the great universities and the engines of opinion.

At the end of the second millennium, Christians are besieged and threatened like the early Christians of Rome and elsewhere in the ancient world. We may not have to worship in catacombs; in countless ways, however, Christians are forced to live an underground existence, since the ruling elites view faith as—at best—irrelevant.

Our vulnerability lies in our technical view of life. In the West, we look for leaders who are technicians in national and international affairs, dismissing the ancient view that real leadership is to be found in the human character. For many Westerners, moral distinctions are secondary to expertise and effectiveness at handling social problems.

Time and again, we hear people say that they like a public figure's policies, even though they disapprove of his behavior as a person—and usually, they end up supporting the person whose policies they find worthwhile. This is a far cry from the attitudes held by citizens when religion occupied a commanding place in American life. Back then, Amer-

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icans understood that character was central, that what a politician espoused could not take precedence over his personal life, that the policies he favored could not be the final yardstick for judgment. These days, the worst kind of people can retain popularity simply because of their political stance. This, of course, is what happens in a totalitarian society, where moral judgments are replaced by party judgments. This makes possible atrocities on a colossal scale; they are justified as ideological necessities.

Organized religion is not immune to the twists, turns, and distorted thinking of the postmodern era. Disbelief is the new orthodoxy, cropping up even within churches. It manifests itself in the repudiation of beliefs held from the earliest days of the Church. In his passion for multiculturalism, the Rt. Rev. Michael Ingram of the Anglican Church of Canada has proclaimed his faith in a new "interfaith deity who inspires modern pluralists." He condemns what he calls "Christian exclusiveness," which teaches that salvation is found only through Jesus Christ.

Attitudes such as these, says George Forsyth of the Catholic Campaign for America, "led modern civilization into a moral wilderness in which the only guidelines are derived from emotional intensity." This message is one of moral destruction.

Anyone who truly understands and appreciates the spiritual richness of Western civilization is appalled at the prospect of a materialist, technological society devoid of spiritual aims. The technoligizing of Western society leads to an impoverishment of the spirit and the loss of genuine cultural diversity. The rhythms of nature and ordered social life, the rituals of community and celebration of the spirit established over the centuries, are displaced by the demands of a technological regime. The teacher stands in danger of replacement by a computer, and correspondence, a rich mine of human interaction, has been virtually wiped out by impersonal, impermanent e-mail. Every aspect of life is being dehumanized, eliminating personal contact.

While many of us have adjusted easily to the new machines, the technology and its intellectual and spiritual ramifications have barely penetrated our consciousness. Most people see the new technology only as a tool for organizing and storing information. They don't see the rift between the use of the new machines and our aims as human beings. Unlike the Marxist revolution of the early 20th century, the technological revolution does not deliberately set out to mold a man.

Of course, it would be utterly absurd to suggest that the mere use of computers turns people away from a Christian worldview. But over a lifetime in which every aspect of life is computerized, computers undoubtedly have the potential for changing a person's view of existence. Instead of making people feel closer, the change is likely to produce isolation.

With the spread of the technological society, deconstructionism has become influential. Deconstructionism is the denial of permanent truth and the devaluation of language and cultural authority. President Clinton, for one, clearly viewed language as a mere social construct in which the meaning of words is indeterminate. This erosion of meaning in language has a certain relationship to the erosion of belief—the understanding of the fixity of spiritual truth.

Although belief in God is not dead, the number of communities of believers in the West is down compared to the overall population. The force of Christianity depends on communities of believers. The Church is the Body of Christ; Christianity is not a solitary affair. From the beginning, Christians have organized themselves in communities led by bishops. They do not have to be large communities. For Christians, organized worship in tiny chapels is as valid and compelling as worship in giant Gothic cathedrals.

Since the earliest days of Christianity, men and women have lived in monastic communities separated—to some degree—from the surrounding world. The monastic life is alien to much of the modern world and has suffered severe setbacks in the West in the last 40 years. Still, it persists. While it is unlikely that, in the 21st century, monasticism will reclaim the place that it held in the medieval world, it is possible that it will enjoy some degree of revival, due to the increased pressures and horrors of postmodern life. Once again, monasteries may become islands of civilization in a world where authentic faith and civilization are beleaguered.

The main theater of spiritual struggle, of course, is the Western world, where the threat of postmodern technonihilism is greatest. As the communists used to say, the front is everywhere. Education, social life, the family: All the institutions of the Western world are under an unceasing barrage from the nihilists. Whittaker Chambers, writing in *Witness*, said that "history is cluttered with the wreckage of nations that have become indifferent to God, and died." Indifference characterizes scores of millions in our time, who are obsessed with the consumer culture and its ways.

Christianity is under siege and retreating in the face of secular materialism, which advances through both moral indifference and outright hostility. In this country, once proudly Christian, recognition of God in the public schools and other public places is prohibited. Religious freedom may be better protected in Russia than in the United States. In America today, Christians—who, in the early days, would not bow to the will of the caesars and who accepted martyrdom for their faith—yield their rights with only the mildest of protests.

As Christians struggle to strengthen and expand the influence of believing communities in the face of postmodern technonihilism, they cannot permit themselves to think that everything can be accomplished on this side of eternity. The forces opposed to Christianity are stronger now than ever before.

The Most Rev. Fabian Bruskewitz, bishop of Lincoln, Nebraska, reminds us that

> there are times and places when we must share in our common humanity the concerns and values of the world around us. There are other times when we must flee from them, oppose them with all our strength and dare to be different.

There are parts of this world, he continues, that are "aggressively anti-Christian," where manipulation and control extend to "false beliefs and evil morals."

To resist those beliefs and pseudomorals, to struggle with all our moral and intellectual energy against the new anticivilization, is the great mission and task facing Christians in the new millennium.

Anthony Harrigan writes from Washington, D.C.

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Duke Chapel, Then and Now

by Mark Tooley

In December, the dean of the chapel at Duke University in North Carolina, along with the school's president, announced that same-sex "weddings" could be celebrated at Duke's imposing Gothic chapel. The announcement came as somewhat of a surprise: Duke is affiliated with the United Methodist Church, which officially disapproves of same-sex unions. Moreover, the dean is William Willimon, a United Methodist minister who is usually an ally of evangelicals within his denomination. Duke will now join the ranks of Harvard, Yale, Stanford and other prominent universities whose chapels are open to homosexual "weddings."

According to Duke's reasoning, "diversity" on Duke's campus requires toleration of same-sex ceremonies conducted by religious denominations that do not oppose them. Potentially, this could include services led by clergy from the United Church of Christ, the Unitarian Universalist Association, some Jewish groups, and perhaps a few others. Most Christian clergy would be forbidden by their own denominations from conducting such ceremonies, including any clergy from the United Methodist Church.

"It is not, in our opinion, a matter of the Chapel approving or disapproving of this liturgical innovation, but rather a question of how much religious diversity we should accommodate," explained a statement from Willimon and Duke's president, Nannerl Keohane. Willimon had previously opposed same-sex ceremonies in the chapel. He now says that allowing the ceremonies "in no way legitimizes these unions from a United Methodist point of view."

The recommendation from Duke's Committee to Explore Blessing of Same-Sex Unions admitted the chapel's "rootedness in specifically Christian tradition." But its statement notes that many of its committee members believe that it is that very tradition that mandates the chapel's offer of "hospitality" to same-sex couples who "seek support in pursuing their faith development." The committee generously promises that no clergy will be compelled to perform homosexual "marriages" if their consciences preclude it.

Most of the verbiage from the chapel's dean, the university's president, and the Same-Sex Unions Committee presumes that Duke Chapel is a crossroads of interfaith, social, and sexual diversity. Duke officials grudgingly admit that it is primarily a Christian church. But their definition of "church" is noteworthy. For them, the chapel, as a church, is assumed to be a religious marketplace where there is a cacophony of divergent voices, with no single unifying message but tolerance. There seems to be no thought that United Methodists have a right to ask others, in an ecumenical spirit, to refrain from activities that Methodists (and almost all other Christian churches) would consider abhorrent.

Duke's current vision of its chapel, not surprisingly, is quite different from the vision offered by the chapel's founders. The sermons from its 1935 dedication ceremonies still make for fascinating reading. For its founders, the chapel was not to be a debating hall, or a laboratory for social experimentation, but preeminently a pulpit of Christian proclamation and truth. A current Duke website describes the chapel's founding ceremony as "interfaith." But the documents from that day show only Christian hymns, Christian prayers, and Christian sermons.

The world of 1935, amid the Depression and the rise of both fascism and communism, seemed to be engulfed in secularism and paganism. Nearly all the speakers at the chapel's dedication portrayed it as a spearhead for reclaiming a waning culture for Christianity.

In a statement that would not be expected from President Keohane, then-president B.R. Lacy declared:

> The chapel says to the world that here God has the preeminence and that all life should be lived under His shadow, within the sound of His voice, and under the influence of His beauty and holiness.

Duke's 19th-century founders, along with the 20th-century tobacco heirs who endowed it with money and a new name, envisioned the university as a Christian center of higher education, under the tutelage of the Methodist Church, with the chapel at the spiritual center of that Christian oasis.

"This chapel must speak of Christ," President Lacy insisted, and "its simple ceremonies of our Protestant faith [must] center in the open Word of God . . ." He imagined a "thousand voices" within its walls reciting the Apostles' Creed. In contrast to young people elsewhere in the mid-1930's who were following Mussolini, Hitler, or Stalin, he saw the chapel leading Duke's students to "Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord." They would "form a deathless loyalty and a glowing love for Him who gave Himself to reveal the Father's heart and to bring all men under the Father's reign."

As St. Paul appealed to the younger Timothys and Tituses of his day, Duke Chapel would make disciples for the Lord—or so Lacy hoped. "It is for this we pray as in this high day this chapel is dedicated to God." Duke's president, along with the other speakers, portrayed the chapel as a seedbed for future generations of Christian scholars who would conform a fallen world to the will of the Triune God.

The Right Reverend Edwin Penick, in his sermon at the dedication, saw in the chapel's dominance of the campus skyline the hope that God's truth would guide the university.

> A Christian pulpit, set up in the center of such a university as this, calls not for mere approval of the life of Jesus or pious recommendation of the principles of His teaching, but for an intrepid demonstration of how that life may be emulated, and specific directions as to how His teaching may be applied to modern life.

Penick saw Duke Chapel as sounding the "passionate crusader's call" and "rallying men to standards of righteousness against disintegrating social forces."

Like other speakers, Penick saw the Gospel proclaimed in Duke Chapel as part of a coherent presentation of God's truth throughout a Christian university. The various departments and courses were not to be unrelated or pursuing separate "chaotic" paths; each was to be a spoke of the wheel of God's revelation. "May God abide in this holy place, and the Spirit of Truth keep the message and usages of this chapel, like light, pure and undefiled," he concluded.

The Reverend Willis Richard Cullom of Wake Forest College, a Baptist institution, saw the chapel as a sign of hope against the "well-organized spread of secularism." It would aid in "capturing and subduing to Christ and His ideals the new civilization which is emerging from the shattered ruins of the old." The

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chapel would help to determine whether the common culture would be "inspired by Christian or pagan conceptions of the meaning and purpose of human life." As the "heart of the university," it would proclaim "eternal verities" and insist that "Thou shalt have no other gods."

Lynn Hough, then-dean of Drew Theological Seminary in New Jersey, delivered the main dedicatory sermon:

> The cathedral on the campus is the perpetual witness to the imperial place of religion in human life. . . . The cathedral on the campus embodies in stone, the very genius of the Christian religion. . . . The cathedral on the campus is a summons to men to find the synthesis of all experiences in Jesus Christ.

"By and by not only here, but about the United States and out over the world the influences of this chapel will be felt," Hough concluded confidently. "It will give gracious inspiration to spiritual pilgrims, and it will speak its deepest word to those who have been captured by the incredible love of Jesus Christ."

These were (justifiably) mighty and soaring words to describe a towering stone edifice in which the figures of biblical heroes and heroines are engraved, as well as the heroic visages of Methodist luminaries John Wesley, Francis Asbury, Thomas Coke, and George Whitefield.

When the first same-sex ceremony is celebrated in the nave of Duke Chapel by the bold Unitarian or United Church of Christ clergyperson who claims that dubious honor, the frowning faces of those evangelists, along with the downcast eyes of Duke family members memorialized in marble, will ponder the scene beneath them, as their spiritual legacies and philanthropy are betrayed. They will also understand that Duke Chapel has—as the dedicatory sermons prophesied—become a spiritual beachhead. But now that beachhead does not face outward from the church into the world, but inward from the world into the church.

"And if there ever comes a day when Christianity has waned in power, men will come into buildings like this and say: 'What majesty of thought lived in the mind of man before it was flung out in this magnificent nave,'" sermonized Lynn Hough at the chapel's dedication.

> And they will go back and listen again to the words of Jesus, and they will go back to the long centuries of Christian history, and the old faith will once more command their minds and dominate their conscience and bend their will to its purpose.

The words of Jesus have not been silenced in Duke Chapel. Orthodox sermons can still be heard on Sunday mornings. But the power of Christianity has clearly waned during the rest of the week and around the campus. Perhaps, some day, Duke Chapel's divinely inspired architecture will remind the university administrators more forcefully of the One to Whom the chapel still belongs.

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ART

Hate for Hate's Sake

by Aaron D. Wolf

Radical feminist art has found a new home in Rockford, Illinois—or at least, you might think so, if you went to Rockford's Riverfront Museum Park on April 6. There, in Rockford's ever-evolving "cultural corridor," you could view the works of "cultural critic" Mary Ellen Croteau, which included a Mason jar full of pickled—er, it was titled "Men I Have Known."

Croteau, a fiftysomething feminist with a Cheshire-cat grin and horn-rimmed glasses, gave a slide-show presentation of her work entitled "Imagining Women: Misogyny through the Ages." Two of her pieces—"Madonna and Child" and "The Annunciation"—were featured in the local Gannett paper. The former is a knock-off of Sebastiano del Piombo's 16th-century masterpiece of the same name; Croteau has given the bambino a sex-change operation, and both "Mary" and "Jesus" are now Asian. Even more stunning is her "Annunciation"—Gabriel has the face of Randall Terry, who holds a dead fetus; this time, Mary stands pointing away from him (as in "*There's* the door"), cocksure and with her other hand on her hip.

Croteau hails from the Windy City east of Rockford, where she received training at the Art Institute after her husband left her and their children high and dry in 1973. Having become pregnant by a heretofore unnamed man, she was "forced" to have an abortion. In the absence of Jerry Springer, who had not yet arrived on the scene in Chicago, she turned to high art to express her rage. A victim (so she says) of date rape as a young coed, she had been nursing a hatred for all things patriarchal and Christian for several oppressed years.

Rockford must be nurturing some hatred as well, since its taxpayer-supported Riverfront Museum Park played host to this antichrist of pop art. The campus—just two blocks away from *Chronicles*' headquarters—is owned by the Rockford Park District, a governmental body separate from the City of Rockford. Bewildered by an eternal desegregation lawsuit, white flight, and the highest property taxes in the United States, Rockfordians are quick to point to the Park District as one of the city's main attractions, and they allow themselves to be taxed even more to maintain the parks, golf courses, and "cultural corridor." One question remains: Are the taxpayers of Rockford really that eager to spend their time (and money) wallowing in anti-Christian bigotry?

Aaron D. Wolf is the assistant editor of Chronicles.

LIBERAL ARTS

WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?

"Boston artist Rob Surette brings Jesus to life through dramatic painting illustrated to beautiful music. Watch in amazement as Rob, who is covered with a wide spectra of splattered paint, rhythmically hovers about while painting incredibly realistic mural-sized portraits of Jesus in the time it takes for only two songs to play. Rob's performance is done as an expression of love for Jesus, and each of his Prayer-Paintings capture Christ's tender Spirit in their own way. Interleaved with motivational words and inspirational testimony, this one-hour performance starts off with great suspense and builds to a dramatic climax."

—from a press release for "Prayers to Painting," an art exhibition at a Catholic high school in Stamford, Connecticut.

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by George McCartney

Fearful Symmetry

One of my favorite films is Carol Reed's 1960 adaptation of Graham Greene's novel *Our Man in Havana*, which tells the tale of James Wormold, an ordinary Englishman somehow marooned in pre-Castro Havana, where he manages a vacuum shop.

This most unadventurous of fellows suddenly finds himself seduced into spying for British military intelligence by the promise of big money. Wholly unsuited to the task, he decides to invent the "intelligence" his spymasters crave. This way, he convinces himself, he will be able to take their money and, at the same time, do no harm. What he doesn't foresee is that his fantasies will be taken seriously not only by the credulous Brits but by an equally benighted "other side." To his horror, the professional spies begin to endanger a swelling number of innocents on the basis of his supposedly harmless imaginings.

As he had done with *The Third Man*, Reed collaborated with Greene both on the script and the filming—with marvelous results. Who could resist a movie that puts Alec Guinness, Noël Coward, and Ernie Kovacs in the same frame?

Forty years later, director John Boorman has followed in Reed's footsteps. He has collaborated with today's foremost espionage novelist, John le Carré, to film his 1996 narrative *The Tailor of Panama*, a 330-page homage to Greene's *Havana*. As le Carré himself points out in the afterword: "Without Graham Greene this book would never have come about. [His] notion of an intelligence fabricator would not leave me alone." So it's not surprising that Boorman's adaptation reworks Reed's film almost point-for-point and includes some unlikely—but ultimately brilliant—casting. Although not as broadly comic as *Our Man in Havana*, *The Tailor of Panama* is just as deft and devastating. There's plenty of humor, much of it angry and edged with disgust, but the fun is never allowed to detract from the all-too-convincing portrayal of the human waste that international intrigue leaves in its wake.

Like many of le Carré's works, *Panama* revolves around a character doubling. This is announced early in the film when

The Tailor of Panama

Produced by John le Carré, John Boorman, and Kevan Barker with Columbia Pictures
Directed by John Boorman
Screenplay by John le Carré, John Boorman, and Andrew Davies
Released by Columbia Pictures

Harry Pendel, the eponymous tailor, tenderly helps his ten-year-old daughter rehearse William Blake's "Tyger, Tyger" while taking her to school. When she comes to the last lines, "What immortal hand or eye / dare frame thy fearful symmetry," she mispronounces "symmetry." As he patiently corrects her, a skulking figure emerges from the background almost as if summoned by Blake's words. This is British intelligence agent Andy Osnard, who has designs on Pendel and will shortly become his sinister secret-sharer. Together, they constitute a "fearful symmetry" indeed. Osnard has long wallowed in ruthless, squalid experience, while Pendel has gingerly nurtured a deliberate (if somewhat soiled) innocence. Once Osnard corners Pendel, it will be a battle to the finish.

Panama is one of those rare action films that insists that deeds have consequences for which people must take responsibility. Further, it expects its audience to listen to its dialogue. Worse, it has no special effects. Well, that's not quite true: There is one special effect—Pierce Brosnan's remarkably fierce performance as Osnard, the shrewd, bullying field agent determined to recruit Pendel for spy work. He sees real opportunity in Pendel, the British expat with a compromising secret in his background, and he means to exploit him for all he's worth.

Until now, Brosnan has always seemed entirely innocent of acting. He has been little more than a glamorous cipher at the center of the James Bond films. His talent has been to look heroically debonair as the action swirls around him—a sort of feathery echo of Cary Grant, floating through his roles with weightless elegance. But here, astonishingly, Brosnan has real heft and force. He's taken his Bond persona and twisted it a few significant degrees toward the sinister. What emerges is the *real* James Bond—the man behind the series' cartoon, a thug barely disguised by a patina of pseudo-upper-class British manners.

Brosnan's performance is a revelation on several levels and will, I hope, upset his fans. From behind his enviable looks, he manages to project a moral ugliness of truly monstrous proportions. Gone are the arch *moues* and fussy primping at his perfectly tailored suits. He grins and snarls menacingly in his rumpled tropical linens, wearing a two-day beard and a 47-year-old stomach sagging from drink and indolence. His blue eyes have a deadly reptilian cast. As he lounges in a chair or slouches against a window frame, he tilts his head slightly forward and gazes from under the thick cover of his black eyebrows, probing every person he meets for weaknesses he can exploit. Any presentable woman under 50 becomes a target for his predatory come-ons garnished with sleazy double entendres. Meeting a pretty diplomat at the British legation in Panama City, he brazenly makes passes at her under the ambassador's nose. At one point, she remarks that, compared to London, their offices are "a little on the pokey side." A master of adolescent repartee, he lasciviously repeats her words: "A bit on the pokey side's all right for me." Although she rolls her eyes at his charmless banter, she winds up in his bed. Osnard assumes he need not respect others to get his way; he merely has to lean on them—and sadly, he's right more often than not. At one point, he notices another woman whose profile has been horribly scarred. Remarking on her comely body, he wonders aloud whether she would be willing to turn her face away while he availed himself of her yet-undamaged charms.

This is the real 007: irredeemably vulgar and unspeakably callous, a man who routinely intimidates and beats others into submission. Ian Fleming once said he conceived of Bond as a blunt instrument wielded by the state to defend its interests. Osnard shows us the consequences of being a blunt instrument both to others and to himself. He wears a permanent sneer, consumes pornography, and carries a hip flask from which he steadily nips. He's clearly determined to anes-

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thetize himself against any vestiges of human feeling. For others, he can only afford to feel contempt. Yet, as repellent as he is, he's nonetheless fascinating. You cannot help wondering how he became this moral cretin. Is it his rottenness that draws a certain kind of woman to him? Does he somehow inspire a paradoxical desire both to enjoy and to tame his crude masculine heedlessness?

Osnard is a dangerous man and—to the inexperienced—that can be alluring. But he's become even more dangerous now that he's fallen into disgrace with his superiors for abusing his license to push others around. To get him out of their hair, they have fobbed him off on their "pokey" Panamanian embassy "to watch the canal." As Osnard cynically explains, London doesn't want the world's most famous man-made waterway to fall into "the wrong hands now that it's in the wrong [i.e., Panamanian] hands." Knowing his career has been jeopardized, perhaps terminally, he's like a wounded tiger, all the more feral for its pain and fear. He means to retrieve his fortunes and is more than usually ready to sacrifice others to do so.

Brosnan's performance is matched by Geoffrey Rush as Pendel, the tailor who came to Panama some 20 years before to bury a past that includes doing time for arson and insurance fraud in London. Having learned his trade in prison, he sets himself up as the respectable proprietor of Pendel and Braithwaite, a distinguished gentleman's clothier selling bespoke suits. Despite Panama City's tropical climate, he has decorated his shop to resemble the stuffiest of London's clubs, with leather furniture and oak-paneled walls. We find him proudly presenting a customer with a bolt of fine wool, pointing out in his muted cockney that its weight is "all a gentleman should have to endure in this diabolical climate." Harry, a natural storyteller, has invented a bogus history for himself. He prattles absurdly about carrying on a 400-year tradition of Savile Row tailoring and almost seems to believe his marketing malarkey. And why not? It has made him quite successful. Panama's 30 ruling families, along with their lawyers and bankers, all wear his $2,500 suits. He even tailored their personal thug-in-chief Manuel Noriega before the little butcher was forced to retire by George Bush, Sr., whom one of the local Brits calls his ungrateful "Frankenstein."

Successful though he has been, all is not well with Pendel. Desiring to join the upper class, he has bought a farm on usurious terms—two percent per month. Given the tardy payments of his uppity clientele, he finds himself falling behind on his mortgage. This, together with the fact that his proper wife knows nothing of his criminal past, makes Pendel ideally vulnerable to Osnard's methods. All Osnard has to do is offer him the carrot of big money and flourish the stick of exposure.

As tailor to the local rich and infamous, Pendel would seem a perfect candidate to be Osnard's man in Panama. There's just one problem: Despite his one brush with the law and his penchant for fabrication, Pendel is fundamentally decent. Yes, he knows his suits confer unearned respectability on some unsavory characters. Nevertheless, "an unrepentant innocence [shines] from his baby blue eyes," as le Carré puts it. In a land where most of the upper class is supported—directly or indirectly—by money laundering and the drug trade, Pendel has joyfully embraced domestic virtue, blissfully cultivating his garden. And well he should, for it is inhabited by Louisa (Jamie Lee Curtis), his beautiful wife to whom he is unswervingly devoted, and their two lovely children. Nothing gives him more pleasure than serving them. He daily rises to make them all breakfast and then drives the kids to school. He is emphatically unsuited for secret service. Although he has no compunction about flattering his customers to retain their trade, he has no stomach for manipulating them to gain the kind of information Osnard wants. So, like Greene's Wormold, he turns to invention. Among other things, he tells Osnard that the canal is to be sold to the Chinese. Although this is absurd on its face, his spymaster instantly believes him. As in *Havana*, the more preposterous and more dangerous the information, the more credulous the spies. (How true this rings!) They are trained to suspect the very worst and are only too happy to have their suspicions confirmed. The worse things get, the more influence and money they can wield. In *Havana*, Wormold draws pictures of huge weapons being built in "the snow-covered mountains of Cuba," using his vacuum cleaners as models. When the head of military intelligence sees them, he grows ecstatic. "They'll make the H-bomb a conventional weapon," he chortles. Asked if this is desirable, he responds, "Of course. Nobody worries about conventional weapons anymore." The threat these devices may pose is less important to him than the career opportunity they represent. I won't discuss here how Osnard uses Pendel's fictions. Suffice it to say, they're eagerly embraced by the worst to the detriment of the best.

As the respective lamb and tiger of *The Tailor of Panama*, Pendel and Osnard perfectly express Blake's fearful symmetry. They are two poles of human behavior—devotion and betrayal—which God, in His mysterious way, has permitted to coexist. The question is: Which will prevail?

Panama is at once exceptionally entertaining and morally provocative, and it features strong performances by all, including the supporting players. An almost unrecognizable Brendan Gleeson plays a former anti-Noriega revolutionary with a touching mixture of gusto and pathos. As Pendel's wise and protective assistant (the woman whose face was irreparably scarred by Noriega's goons), Leonor Varela is forceful and convincing. Even Curtis does well as Pendel's wife, a woman entirely immune to Osnard's appeal because she has learned the inestimable value of her husband's decency and devotion.

I can give Boorman's movie no higher praise than to say it is a match for Reed's *Our Man in Havana*.

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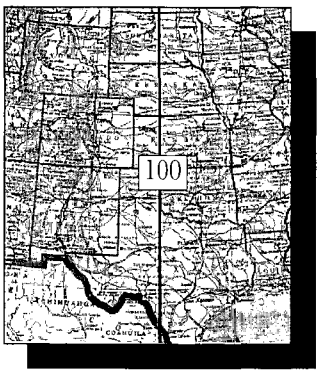
The Hundredth Meridian

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

Getting Out of Dodge



The Founding Fathers intended the "Enumeration" (Article I, Section 2) not only as a means of assuring representational equality among the states but as a graph displaying the growth of the American nation in size and prosperity. For almost 200 years, the decennial census could plausibly be accepted as doing that. The last three censuses (those of 1980, 1990, and 2000), however, need to be seen for what they really are: The graph-paper plotting of a plot, the conspiracy of an evil and mendacious overclass to destroy both the nation and the society it controls. Census 2000 in particular is evidence that the members of the United States government no longer understand their custodial responsibility to be the welfare of their country and constituencies, but the realization of a plan so vast that the word "global" only begins to describe it.

Christ's several parables about good and bad stewards come to mind, though if you exclude the vineyard keepers who murdered the landowner's son, the sins involved here tend to be more of omission rather than commission. Still, stewardship is a useful standard to apply to our contemporary ruling class, since it concerns something everyone understands in a visceral way—whether we are talking about the conditions of life on a wealthy Jewish estate in Roman-occupied Palestine or in one of the sprawling new Denver suburbs—and that is livability.

An overabundance of riches of any sort is possible, including the gifts of freedom and mobility. An absentee full-time employee for the past two decades, I've lived where I pleased and carried my house away on my back when it no longer pleased me to remain there. Everyone I know envies me this freedom (at least they *say* they do), yet much of the time I feel like the poor little rich girl in the story. Eighteen years there, 23 months in the next place, 20 here . . . Where next? I can live anywhere I want, but where do I *really* want to live? Western towns are few and far between, and Ryder's rates aren't coming down any, not even following the late unpleasantness in OK City. I'm like the ass in the fable, unable to accept the law—inevitable as that of gravity—of trade-off. Wyoming has a small population, great hunting, and no income tax. Also, little social and intellectual sophistication, no restaurants, no springtime. Colorado has all three—along with an income tax, world-class traffic jams, and about a quarter of the white population of California, *circa* 1990. New Mexico is as beautiful as Wyoming—and warmer—but it's essentially a Third World country where native poachers have nearly exterminated all the huntable game and once-pleasant towns have been swollen to sprawling cities by immigrants from north of the Rio Grande, armed with golf clubs and cell phones. Montana—with superb trout fishing—in the last 20 years has become Hollywood-on-the Yellowstone; Utah, a slickrock paradise where outlaws can (and recently have) disappeared without a trace (apparently for good), is a theocracy dedicated to converting the peoples of the world and gathering them all in to Deseret (in container ships, if necessary), with a wink and a nod from the INS. Obviously, I'm finicky, indecisive . . . hard to please. Nobody to blame but myself.

Recently, though, I've begun to suspect the choice is not finally between warm or cold, high or dry, town or city, but between Not Enough and Too Much—between one type of unliveability and another. In this sense, America, touted by enthusiasts as the most diverse nation the world has ever seen, in fact is becoming more and more a No Exit society, even as the Entry door remains jammed wide open. There's a connection between the two, I'm betting, that bodes ill for the future of the country, even if I can find some assurance in the thought that my malaise is not, after all, my fault.

Two related stories landed, by coincidence, on my desk the other morning. The first, printed on the front page of the State section of the *Casper Star-Tribune*, was a melancholy piece datelined Lusk, a town of 1,500 people situated 22 miles west of the Nebraska border in east-central Wyoming, whose economy is based almost exclusively on ranching and railroading. Three years ago, Microsoft aired a series of prime-time TV commercials showing Lusk in its most photogenic aspect and ending with the question, "Where do you want to go today?" The ads brought plenty of inquiries to the local chamber of commerce, but no business relocations there. Instead, a small company printing telephone faceplates for phone booths and hotels picked up and left. "They moved to Colorado because they needed high-speed Internet, overnight shipping, and everything," the past president of the chamber explained. (And just imagine being 41 miles from the closest interstate!) "This town is better than a lot of places," one resident told the reporter for the *Salt Lake Tribune*. "It's quiet. People kind of let people live." There aren't many places left in the socially mobilized U.S. of A. you can say *that* about.

The second story, clipped from the local paper in Concordia, Kansas, arrived later in the morning from Ed Detrixhe in the neighboring town of Clyde. Entitled "Dwindling Population Hard on Small Kansas Towns," this article was datelined Utica, a town in the western end of the state where the population continues to decline—and to age. "Every time somebody dies, we never replace them," a farmer in his mid-60's (whose grandfather homesteaded in the vicinity in 1878) told the AP reporter. The Utica high school will close at the end of the school year; the elementary and high schools in nearby McCracken have been gone for years. "There will always be cattle out in this part of the country," a young female veterinarian (married to another vet) said. "Maybe fewer farmers, but the same number of cattle." Cows let people live and let live, too.

Most of the hangers-on do so from

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choice, "because you can't beat the quality of life" in small-town America, as one young woman explained to the (probably flabbergasted) AP. If Lusk isn't enough for you, you can move to Fort Collins, Denver, or Colorado Springs; when Utica gets wearisome and you can no longer pay for the upkeep on your grandparent's house, the humming, unconstrained cities of Wichita, Topeka, and Manhattan are waiting with open arms to rescue you from the failing clutches of the dying American Gothic era and pull you into the posturban dreamscape, where Too Much is Never Enough. Most folks aren't likely to be happy there, though; while postmodern Wichita and Denver are Too Much, and modern Utica and Lusk are Not Enough, there was a time in the memory of those still alive and walking about at the hoary age of 50 when Denver was Less Than Too Much, and Lusk was Just Enough. That time, however, was before current demographic and economic transformations made the destruction of the Old America, both rural *and* urban, a *fait accompli*.

Just because a place is unlivable doesn't mean that no one lives there, of course, or even that no one *wishes* to do so; only that the life available is incompatible with, or contrary to, healthy human desires and needs. Having lived in one small town and one large one, a single small city as well as the Tucson behemoth, across the Rocky Mountain region north and south, I'm ready to conclude that the American West as it's been made over by Progress during the past 30 years is, in this sense, unlivable. The small towns, no longer whole and entire communities, are like a body dependent on long-distance hookup to a major medical center in order to maintain the functions of several vital organs that have, for one reason or another, been removed. Ease of access to a metropolitan center has destroyed provincial culture—and with it a curiosity about cosmopolitan sophistication. (Small-town people visit the nearest big city to shop—and afterward buy a ticket to see a movie they can watch a few months later on HBO.) Eighty years ago, when Sinclair Lewis wrote his famous novel, it was nearly impossible, as it is today, to order a well-shaken martini, a decent bottle of wine, or a first-rate meal on Main Street; then as now, you were as unlikely to find serious conversation in a Main Street saloon as to get your whiskey free. Social life was (and is) restricted to the meager provisions of the churches and the social and service clubs, while the resource of self-reliant talent for amateur entertainment was already beginning to erode. (Compare Laura Ingalls Wilder's account of imaginative frontier conviviality in *Little Town on the Prairie* with Gopher Prairie's imitative, timid, self-conscious socializing.) Provincial culture (American, British, French, Italian) is provincial culture, but thinness is not the same as incompleteness; and *incomplete* is what provincial culture is today, when small towns are no longer their own main economic, social, and recreational centers, and their political identity has grown increasingly tenuous. American towns are, in many ways, unchanged from what they were a hundred years ago, except for what they have lost over the course of a century—and what they have lost is enormous, especially their groundedness in the land that molded and sustained them. Meanwhile, hemorrhaging populations produce an imbalance in age stratification and leave the local breeding pool insufficient for natural replacement. From today's perspective, it appears entirely plausible that Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street* portrayed the American small town of the 1920's not all that far below its zenith, rather than in its striving, ascendant stage.

You may recall that Carol Kennicott escapes Gopher Prairie to Washington, D.C., only to discover that the capital city of the American empire is . . . *the same thing, only more so*. Her mistake, of course, was to choose Washington as Gopher Prairie's antithesis—not New York, Chicago, New Orleans, or San Francisco. (We're talking about 1920, remember.) Still, Washington in the 1920's was a kind of Periclean Athens compared not only with its present self but with almost every other big (no one uses the word "great" to describe our modern metroplexes) American city of the 21st century, because the same economic, political, and demographic forces that ruined America's rural communities have wrecked its urban ones as well. Industrial agriculture, "economies of size," technological abstraction, consumerism, mass culture, mass immigration: All these phenomena, in the course of sucking population from small cities, small towns, and the countryside at large, have swelled American urban centers to such an extent that normal human life—the life of Just Enough, not Too Little or Never Enough—is impossible. Metaphorically, modern cities are medieval princes who steal all the food their starving serfs produce and, having eaten themselves to a grotesque corpulence, suffer an apoplectic stroke and live out the remainder of their days in impaired mental and physical condition.

Unlike certain medieval princes, however, these cities lack the civilization that devolved from those princes to the bourgeoisie of the modern age, both as defunct now as the feudal system that preceded them. As late as the 1950's, there were advantages to living in cities—for the rich, poor, and middle class alike. Today—when ethnic neighborhoods have been replaced by ghettoes and Park Avenue by gated communities; Fifth Avenue by The Mall, Checker cabs by private pods (like hordes of wheeled locusts), walking by driving, sidewalks by pedestrian walkways, cocktail and supper parties by TV and the Internet, society by cocaine evenings, the delightful compaction of buildings and people characteristic of a *real* city by sprawl, eccentricity by pathology—there are no advantages, only drawbacks and liabilities, with neurosis and then madness the eventual result. A few art galleries and concert halls scattered equidistantly about an area so vast that, like Jonah's Nineveh, it takes three days to cross it, plus a different kind of ethnic restaurant for every 300 inhabitants, simply aren't enough to make these bones live. The postmodern American city, unlike the postmodern American town, is defined far more by what it has *gained* (that is to say, *stolen*) than by what it has lost—which is why, as far as livability goes, the two enjoy complementarity.

I thought this through long and hard before deciding it really isn't worth packing my stuff again (for the third time in four years) and getting out of Dodge—chances being I'd end up 5,000 bucks poorer in *another* Dodge, or, worse (*much* worse), in a country boy's nightmare like Kansas City (Hemingway's old town) that only people from Mexico, Asia, India, Pakistan, the Middle East, Indonesia, and other foreign parts seem to find attractive nowadays. (They never knew the Old America they're replacing and wouldn't know what to do with it if they did.) Instead, I've put money down on an older house in Laramie (hardwood floors and interior trim; downstairs den with wood stove, work room for storing tack and guns as well as a place to set up a handloading bench). If life's unlivable here, chances are the same thing goes for anywhere else I can think of to live.

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